# The VICTORS AND THE VANQUISHED of the NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

## 1967-1970:

## Triumph of Truth and Valour over Greed and Ambition

The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War
*Usman Faruk*

# THE VICTORS AND THE VANQUISHED OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR, 1967-1970:

## *Triumph of Truth and Valour over Greed and Ambition*

**Usman Faruk**, CON

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**CONTENTS**

Dedication _____ V
Preface/Acknowledgement _____ VI
Foreword _____ VIII
Introduction _____ X

**CHAPTER ONE** _____ 1
The Historical Background _____ 1

**CHAPTER TWO** _____ 1
The North in the Eyes of the South _____ 1

**CHAPTER THREE** _____ 14
The Attainment of Independence in October 1960 _____ 14

**CHAPTER FOUR** _____ 31

The Remote and Immediate Causes of the Civil War: July 1967-December 197031
The January 15TH 1966 Coup _____ 31

**CHAPTER FIVE** _____ 67
Counter Coup or Retaliation Ramagayya 29th July 1966 _____ 67

**CHAPTER SIX** _____ 79

Reaction of Col. Ojukwu to Yakubu Gowon's Ascension to Power 1st August 1966 _____ 79

**CHAPTER SEVEN** _____ 85
The Stalemate _____ 85

**CHAPTER EIGHT** _____ 106
The Dawn of a New Era _____ 106

**CHAPTER NINE** _____ 120
Beginning of the Civil War _____ 120

The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War *Usman Faruk*
**CHAPTER TEN** 144
Foreign Interests: True and Fair Weather Friends 144

**CHAPTER ELEVEN** 149
Inside "Biafra" 149

**CHAPTER TWELVE** 163
The Brave Captains of the War 163

**CHAPTER THIRTEEN** 170
The Heroes of the War 171

**CHAPTER FOURTEEN** 183
Brief Summary of the Stories of War Culled From the New Nigerian News Papers 1967-1975 183

**CHAPTER FIFTEEN** 199
The Genesis of the Fall of Biafra 199

**CHAPTER SIXTEEN** 205
The British Legacy 205

**CHAPTER SEVENTEEN** 222
The General Characteristics of the North 222

**CHAPTER EIGHTEEN** 231
Some Reflections 231

**CHAPTER NINETEEN** 236
Still on Faith and Valour: lest we Forget 236

**CHAPTER TWENTY** 243
An Overview of the Federal Character System for Nigeria's Future 243

**CHAPTER TWENTY ONE** 256
Conclusion 256

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Nigerian fallen heroes and federal troops, especially those captured northern soldiers who were brutally butchered in detention camps, by their Igbo military captors and their civilian counterparts contrary to the acclaimed charter of the Geneva Convention on treatment of prisoners of war.

A report by General Adeyinka Adebayo after the war, revealed the gory details of the inhumane treatment of captured Nigerian troops (especially Northerners) in the hands of their Igbo captors. The report revealed that out of the captured hundreds of Northern troops and other non northern soldiers, only THREE (3) were found alive in all the detention camps run by the Igbos. The three were
1. Commissioner of Police- Mr. Joseph Adeola an indigene of the Midwest 2. Mr. Ibekwe- also police Commissioner an Ilka Igbo also from the Midwest and 3 Another Midwesterner.

This is contrary to what obtained in the Federal war camps after the war, where ALL captured Igbo rebels were found alive and INTACT (ref. APPENDIX at the back of the book).

Some of them were even directed by General Gowon to be reabsorbed into the Federal Army, because he believed they were misled by their leader into fighting against their fatherland.

The blatant contravention of the charters of the Geneva Convention in this case, remained a thing of worry, more so as none of the succeeding governments of Nigeria- military and civilian- have done ] anything. Provisions of the Geneva Convention have been invoked in war-torn countries like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Liberia, Lebanon, Cote d'voire etc.

Why not in Nigeria?

# Preface/Acknowledgement

I must give thanks to my creator Almighty Allah, for giving me life health, and time to write this book of modesty historical aspects of the Nigerian civil War.

It is with gratitude to Allah that I have been able to recount the various demanding events that had characterized various conflicting stories that took place during the war. I am happy that I am able to know the truth from us the actors from this side of the war.

I must acknowledge the enormous contributions of a number eminent personalities who in one way or the other contributed to the making of this historical book from me, one of the insiders from the Northern side of the conflict.

I shall never forget the contribution given to me by Dr. Al-kassum Abba, the Vice Chancellor of Adamawa State University Mubi, who was the first to have painstaking, edited the book and offered valuable professional advice and criticisms which assisted me greatly in putting the book into a better shape.

I would like also to register my sincere appreciation and thanks to the following: Alhaji Mamman Daura former Managing Director New Nigerian Newspaper up to 15th January, 1966, who wrote the foreword of this book and also edited the book and gave it a proper shape.

Dr. Salihu Bappa of English Department ABU Zaria who also seriously worked on the book so as to raise the standard of English language which paved the way to its current readability.

Alhaji Ahmed T. Abdulkadir who effectively supervised and edited the typing and compilation of the manuscripts.

I cannot also forget the people who earlier played significant roles by granting me oral interviews in

order to record reliable facts as they occurred on the ground. These include celebrated people like Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule (Dan Masanin Kano) former Minister in the Federal Government of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa the first Prime Minister up to 15th January 1966; Alhaji Ibrahim Tako Galadima acting Minister of Defence up to 15th 1966, who later served as Commissioner in the Government of the former North Western State from 1967-1975; Alhaji Inuwa Wada, (Magajin Garin Kano) who was the substantive Minister of Defence up to 15th January 1966, but who was out of the country during the first coup. I must salute their courage and dedication.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my family who born with me during the cause of writing this big project and finally to my personal assistant Malam Ibrahim Gambo Zuru who toiled with me for several years, handling typing and retyping of documents. Without this devotion to duty and patience I would not have this project at the time I required it in print.

Finally, I wish to register my sincere gratitude to numerous friends and indiividuals who advised me during the cause of writing this book especially my close associates and colleagues during the most turbulent period of the civil war 1967 - 1975 and beyond

Alhaji Usman Faruk, CON
13th June, 2012

# Foreword

## Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

Forty years after the cessation of hostilities in the Nigerian civil war, there appears to be a resurgence of efforts to re-write history; to put facts on their heads and to turn falsehood into truth. Alhaji Usman Faruk, first Military Governor of the old North Western State would have none of this.

He has written a carefully arranged recollection of the background to the civil war. As a member of the security apparatus based at the central CID (Ex-Squad) of the Nigeria police, he had an insider's view of development and cross-currents before, during and immediately after the civil war. By chance, he had kept a day-by-day diary which has helped him to effortlessly recount incidents and events of the Nigerian tragedy.

The book is a considerable effort by Usman Faruk. It is an early, matter of fact recollection without making any pretensions to scholarship, but nonetheless a very useful addition to the compendium of literature on the Nigerian State.

The January 1966 coup was the most tragic event in Nigeria's history. The coup itself, impetuous and outrageous is reminiscent of Michael Okpara's fanatical adventure to capture Nigeria under the auspices of UPGA in 1964. Both events were badly bungled and ended in fiasco, but the 1966 coup changed Nigeria forever and for the worse.

Usman Faruk graphically re-captures the events, especially the hectic moments and comes to roughly the same conclusions as the official Nigerian Federal Government version of the causes and results of the civil war, namely that a group of mainly Igbo

officers determined to wrest control of the Federal Government from the NNA Coalition and eliminate political and military leaders of Northern and (selected) Western Nigeria and install an Eastern Government with Igbo agenda. The counter-coup and the civil war, effectively defeated this move and stopped the attempted fragmentation of Nigeria.

The first wave of what might be called an attempt to fabricate and distort history appeared with books by Alexander Madeibo's "The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War", by Ben Gbulie, "Nigeria's Five Majors" and by Adewale Ademoyega's "Why we struck". All the distortions of history contained in these three books, were effectively countered by A.M. Mainasara in his book: "**The Five Majors: Why they struck" published in 1987**

People should carefully read Usman Faruk's book which though emotional and raucous in parts, graphically translate contemporary attempts at balkanizing Nigeria. In particular, anybody foolish enough to tangle with the North will likely come a cropper. The author, vents his astonishment and anger at the South South for calling us parasites. His views are shared by nearly all Northerners, notably those who were aware of the happenings especially the sacrifices made to rescue the South South from the lion's den. If there is no gratitude, there should at least be respect for history and for the truth.

It is now in everyone's interest to bury the past, live in harmony and build a prosperous future for all Nigerians.

Let sleeping dogs lie.

**Mamman Daura**

# Introduction

Absence of counter publications from the other side to the Nigerian civil war or at least an original effort from the valiant people of northern extraction, who provided the majority of the fighting forces in both the previous colonial wars and the Nigeria civil war, became a source of concern in the years after the conflict. The few publications that have been made, became grossly inadequate to quench the thirst of a multitude of curious young minds, who have all along craved for a balanced account of the entire episode. In a way, therefore, this work is an answer to several demands and inquiries from mainly the northern younger generation who were children at nursery and primary schools, during the Nigerian civil war. Since the end of the war in 1970, there has been a steady growth of young minds in the northern part of the country, with the desire to know the actual events that motivated the greatest civil and military conflict in the history of their motherland. This new breed of educated class with a thirst for factual knowledge, has often challenged the series of publications by the main actors of the war mainly from the defunct *Biafran* side. Not only were most of the publications on the war from the members of the defeated Igbo ethnic group, but the publications contained overwhelmingly serious and shameless distortions of the facts about events that led to the civil war, how the war was prosecuted and how the Igbos were defeated, but humanely treated after the war. However, the lack of or near absence of publications from us the Northerners, became a source of great concern and worry to our brothers

and sisters in the North who happened to be the victors. After all, it is said that history is always written by the winning side.

Consequent upon this, there has been a growing fear on the part of the new generation of Northerners, that if something is not done now, the account of the history of this great war, which their fathers had sacrificed their lives and properties to win, would be tilted in favour of the defeated Igbos whose arm chair Generals are now attempting seriously to stage a "coup of the pen" to turn the table of victory on their side, a feat which they failed to achieve on the battle field. In all honesty, this somewhat innocuous curiosity of the northern young minds, including my own children, prompted this simple effort at setting the records right and by extension assuaging their fears. This has become necessary especially, because I was there and I witnessed the northern victory over the *Biafran* soldiers. Therefore, this is a story of one of the actors, in consultation with some of my colleagues from the northern side of the conflict as well as those from the other side. It is not a product of any academic exercise and is quite different from the cacophony of lies and sentiments as reeled off by the *Biafran* writers, who so shamelessly decided to distort the real facts by adding colour, in a shameless show of historical misrepresentation

# CHAPTER ONE

## The Historical Background

A cursory look at Nigeria's history will reveal a paradox of many facts. It is a history of nation states deliberately welded together by colonial fiat, for mainly the economic and administrative convenience of the colonizer. This coalescence, started in earnest with the amalgamation of the Northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914. Since then, the British had forced a kind of marriage or partnership between Northerners and Southerners who had been at different levels of development. At that time, the North had attained a more, far reaching development level with a firmly rooted eastern civilization and culture than the south. This was made possible because the North or Bilaad Sudan as it was then called, had a long contact with the Arab world, dating back to the 9th or 11th century. The British on their arrival, found the Hausa States and the Kingdom of Borno with well-established systems of government, advanced economies and a network of markets from regional to international levels.

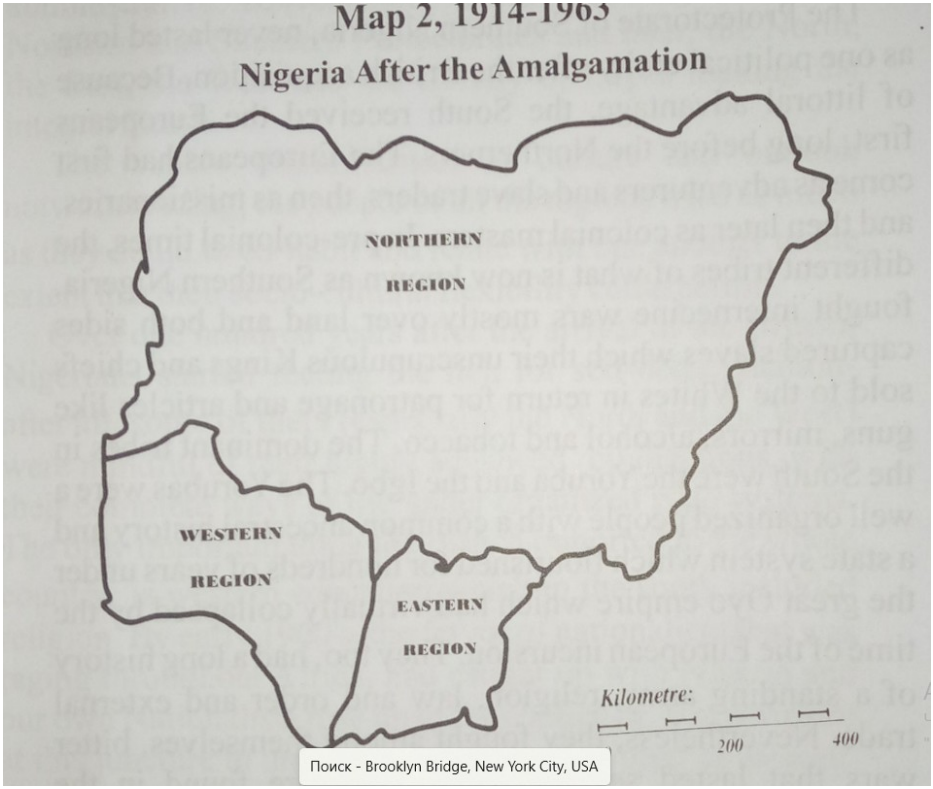
History copiously records the flourishing of these Hausa States: Kano, Katsina, Zazzau, Gobir, Daura, Rano and Biram (Garun Gabas); the Kanem Bornu Empire, and what was later referred to as the 'Seven Lesser Hausa States'- Zamfara, Kwararrafa, Kebbi, Ilorin

(Yoruba), Nupe, Gwari and Yauri. The economic and political development of these states, was facilitated greatly with the advent of the 19th century jihad, led by the great reformer, Sheikh Uthman Danfodio.

These were states that existed to a large extent independent of each other with the apparatuses of government: army, religion, trade, law and order (courts and police), education, and external relations. They traded as much among themselves as with outside states, especially along the well-established Trans-saharan trade routes and across borders with North Africa and Europe.

Differences, especially those bordering on adventures and incursion into each other's lands, were settled through diplomacy and wars. Most of these states, had walled cities as protection against external aggression. It had been internationally acknowledged that the existence of walled cities is a confirmation of an advanced civilisation that lived in these cities. When the great Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio decided to launch the jihad to cleanse the Hausa states of heresy, after he accused the ruling aristocracy of mixing Islam with paganism and oppressing their subjects through obnoxious taxation , he was provided with the opportunity to conquer the Hausa States and replace their leaders with trusted liutenants. This led to the establishment of the islamic government that spanned over one hundred years until the arrival of british colonisers late in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Sokoto Caliphate that emerged, ectended up to Adamawa in the North East, Nupe in the West and Ilorin in the South. This prompted the conclusion that when the Europeans arrived on our soil, they found well established institutions of governance,

with complete sovereignty, organnised armies, police and courts.




The presence of appurtenace of government made the Northerners wonder why the Btitish insisted on of taking over the governance of the land, they fought to thelast, until 1903, when the British superior fire power subdued the gallant caliphate army at Mbormi, an area in the present Gombe state, under the able leadership of the Amirul-Muminin Attahiru I, who was considered up to today as the last Caliph of the twentieth century.

The Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, never lasted long as one political entity after the British acquisition. Because of littoral advantage, the South received the Europeans first, long before the Northerners. The Europeans had first come as adventurers and slave traders, then as missionaries, and then later as colonial masters. In pre-colonial times, the different tribes of what is now known as Southern Nigeria, fought internecine wars mostly over land and both sides captured slaves which their unscrupulous Kings and chiefs sold to the Whites in return for patronage and articles like guns, mirrors, alcohol and tobacco. The dominant tribes in the South were the Yoruba and the Igbo. The Yorubas were a well organized people with a common ancestral history and a state system which flourished for hundreds of years under the great Oyo empire which had virtually collapsed by the time of the European incursion. They too, had a long history of a standing army, religion, law and order and external trade. Nevertheless, they fought among themselves, bitter wars that lasted several years. They are found in the southwestern part of Nigeria, with the Binis, Urhobos and the Itshekiris as their neighbours.

On the southeastern part of what was to become Nigeria, lay the land of the Igbos,the Ikwerres, the Ibibios, the Ijaws, the Efiks and the Ogonis. While the other tribal groups thrived under their differebnt kingdoms, the igbos live in segmented clan based settlements and remained pantheisocratic. That was the position in which the white man found them.

So the British came, welded us together and for administrative convenience, subdivided us into into Northern and Southern protectorate and later, the

North , the East , the West and the colony of Lagos making the integral fourth.

The visible dissimilarities in culture and outlook notwithstanding, the people of all the regions tried as much they could to co-habit and relate with one another to the extent that their socio-cultural flexibility could permit.

Over one hundred years after the arrival of the British, Nigerians started feeling the itch for self-determination-- all, some of them (especially the North and the West) were mindful of their highly advanced civilizations, with their complete ways of life under organized state systems. The only important thing the British imported to the whole country, is western education which in the south included religion. By early 1900's, the fervor of nationalism that was raging throughout Africa had caught up with Nigeria and our own Nationalists rose up to the challenge. It is pertinent at this juncture to understand that the first seed of discord, disunity and fragmentation was sowed by the British to balkanise the de-colonisation process that was on in earnest before 1945, most especially with the growing influence of the NCNC. The British had clearly seen in the writing on the wall immediately after the 1945 general strike organised by late Chief Michael Imuodu. Therefore, they were left with no option than to promote the formation of regional as well as well as tribal political parties, to reduce the significance and influence of the NCNC, which was then depicted by the British as entirely an Igbo party. Consequent upon this, the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (party for the sons of Oduduwa) was formed under the tutelage of the Oni of Ife and it later metamorphosed into what was to be known as Action Group. In the North on the other hand, the Jam'iyar

Mutanen Arewa was formed which later became the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC). It was alleged

that the party was dominated by the sons of the aristocrats. Indeed, this was the beginning of ethnic hostilities and cleavages that led Nigeria later into a period of thirty months of civil war, which claimed millions of lives and properties worth billions of naira (or pound sterling which was then the national currency).

**Map 3,1963**
**Nigeria After the Creation of the Mid Western Region**

Nationalism started first in the South, as the Southerners were more educated (in the western sense of the word) than the Northerners. It therefore stands to reason that the South wanted independence earlier than the North. Both Southerners and Northerners coveted independence, but at different times. The North wanted it at a later date in order to be able to make up for its late start in western education. If the North had accepted independence at an earlier date, it would have remained under another form of local colonial domination, this time under its own compatriots from the South, who had more educated personnel than the North but without commensurate civil conduct. The South on the other hand, as it was observed, wanted the North to capitulate in order to dismantle the North's numerical strength due to its large population and huge land mass. This is because in democracy's popular adage, the majority decides the vote. This divisive scenario created by the British, had far reaching consequences on the future political development of Nigeria. For instance, when the Action Group in 1953 moved a motion for the granting of independence to Nigeria by the British in 1956, it automatically received the backing of the NCNC, but the NPC kicked against it, knowing fully well the disadvantages of its people, most especially in terms of personnel to man the Region. Therefore, the NPC squashed it with an amendment to the proposal. Expectedly, this angered the Southerners' ego and as a result of this, both the AG and the NCNC members in the Assembly walked out of the constitutional conference in protest. The ego trip notwithstanding, the NPC went ahead to introduce some policies aimed at making progress in order to catch up with the other regions educationally and in providing social needs. As a matter of fact, it is on record that in

ten years, the North, did more for the welfare of its people than any other region in Nigeria, knowing

fully well that self-government would not be realistic unless the Region showed beyond all doubts that it was truly ripe for it. The North, even set a record in qualifying for independence in a shorter period than other British colonies.

However, going back to the 1953 crisis in the House of Representatives, no one would have thought, even diehard optimists (Sardau na and Tafawa Balewa inclusive), that the Northern region could have made sufficient material advancement to be self-governed by 1959. It was in the field of material progress that the North was found wanting when the other regions attained self-government earlier. That was the fear of the Southerners. That the North could complete its march to self-government in such a short time, showed that the region possessed the potential for greatness. Analyst O. O. Owoleye writing in the Nigerian Citizen, of 15th May 1959, said inter alia:

*"Like a group of competing teams, the regions chose self government as the first objective. The fast moving, capable East and the West achieved this great objective first and were warmly applauded. The slow moving North came in third and was also declared a winner."*

In the true spirit of brotherhood, non-northerners in the Northern Regional Public Service were assured that they could stay on after the attainment of Regional Self-government, in spite of the Government's intention to press ahead with the northernization policy as energetically as possible. They were equally assured that they would not suffer

any form of discrimination because of ethnic background or place of birth. None other than Sir Gawain Bell, the Governor of the Northern region gave this assurance. He emphatically told the world

that despite its liberal policies, however, the North would vehemently pursue its northernization of public service.

*"Whilst continuing to press on with its own plans for the northernization of the Public Service at all levels, to which I have already referred, my government fully realized the importance of retaining its existing staff. In particular, it is hoped that the proposals made by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and accepted by the Government will encourage overseas officers to remain in the service of the region after self-government. For those Officers who do retire, provision of Five hundred thousand pounds has been made in the coming year for payment of lump-sum compensation. The sum will be paid from the recurrent estimates and is covered by ordinary revenue*".

At this juncture, let me introduce the political parties of the country and their leaders, because I believe doing so will elucidate the North's position more explicitly. In the North, the dominant party was the Northern Peoples' Congress, led by the Great Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarduana of Sokoto, a descendant of Sheikh Usman Danfodio. In the East, was the NCNC, founded by the nationalist, Herbert Macaulay and led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. The West had the Action Group, led by the political sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. All these parties but one, transformed from tribal associations. The NPC from *Jam'iyar Mutanen Arewa* and the Action Group from

Egbe Omo Oduduwa. The NCNC was the only one at that time with a nationalistic agenda and whose leaders wanted only total independence from the yoke of imperialism.

## The Sardauna of Sokoto

The Premier of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauana of Sokoto, was born in June 1910. He was a descendant of Shehu Usman Danfodio, the great Islamic Scholar, Teacher and Reformer. The Sardaua was educated at Sokoto Provincial School from 1920 to 1925. Before he went to school, he had studied Arabic and the Qur'an in the local Qur'anic School. He was a product of the Katsina College, which produced the entirety of senior ministers then in the regional cabinet. Throughout his school days, he was reported to be a brilliant boy and he distinguished himself in sporting activities, especially cricket and fives.

After three years as a teacher at the Sokoto Middle school, his elder brother, the Sarkin Rabah died, and the twenty-five year old Ahmadu was asked to succeed to the post. He had some difficulty administering the district for the first year or two, especially in the collection of taxes and in persuading the people to work hard. During the ensuing years, however, he became more experienced and his remarkable style in administration won him the title of Sardaua, which was conferred on him by the then Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Abubakar, in 1938.

As the Sardauna, he had under his charge fourteen districts in the eastern area of the Sokoto Emirate. For the next six years, he proved himself an efficient administrator and a tolerant leader of the people; and in 1944 he was appointed Administrative Secretary of the Sokoto Native Authority and all the Native Administration institutions came under his authority.

The Sardauna first went to the United Kingdom in 1948, under a British Council tour programme. His first contact with politicians outside Northern Nigeria was in 1950, when he attended the conference for the review of the Nigerian Constitution at Ibadan. He reached the top of his political career in Northern Nigeria, not because it was his primary aim in life, but because of the love and respect he bore for those who advised him. In his own words: "In December, 1948, I was asked by my Native Authority to stand for nomination to the Northern House of Assembly, and I refused.

But he was later convinced and he accepted. His role in the House and in the two Conferences for the review of Nigeria's constitution, both at Kaduna and Ibadan, won him the respect and admiration of his colleagues, so that he was approached to become leader of the Northern Peoples Congress in 1950. As leader of the NPC, he was the link between the aristocrats and the radicals of his party.

As Premier, his personality commanded the respect of all. Opposition parties might dislike the policy of the NPC of which the Sardauna was the leader, but not his role as the Premier.

# Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe

The Premier of Eastern Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was born in 1905 at Zungeru, and first went to school in Onitsha, his father's home town. After some time, however, he went to that great Eastern training ground, the Hope Wadell Institute at Calabar, before completing his schooling in Lagos. His scholastic career took him from Nigeria to America and after hard years of study, he took up a position as an Instructor in Political Science at his old College, Lincoln University. He also studied at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University. The way was then open for a distinguished academic career, but his interest lay in the emergent Africa. His sympathies were entirely with the nationalist movements of the time, and the nationalist leader of the Gold Coast, Kwame Nkrumah, particularly attracted him. So it was to the Gold Coast that he returned in 1931 to take up the editorship of the African Morning Post, in Accra, where he stayed for several years. In America, he had learned the theory of Political Science. In Accra he practiced it; but it was in Nigeria that "Zik" as he was known, was to develop his techniques to the full. An outstanding journalist, in 1937 he founded the West African Pilot and at the same time struggled effectively and earnestly for the Nigerian cause against British rule. Through the years of the Second World War, he maintained his efforts and established himself as his country's leading spokesman. In 1948, his efforts were rewarded when he became a member of the Legislative Council. Since then, he had been a Member of both Western and Eastern Houses of Assembly, and became the first Premier of Eastern Nigeria in 1954. Early in 1957, came an apparent set back-the report of the Foster-

Sutton tribunal of inquiry into the affairs of the African Continental Bank of which Dr. Azikiwe was the founder and Managing Director. Zik at once

resigned and in the regional election, which followed, won a personal vote of confidence by polling 78,000 votes in Onitsha. As leader of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, he played an important role in the London Constitutional talks and he gained one of his principal goals-the premiership of self-governing Eastern Nigeria.

## Chief Obafemi Awolowo

Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the Action Group and Premier of Western Nigeria, was born on March 6, 1909 at Ikenne and was of an Ijebu father and an Egba mother. Although he attended the Ikenne Anglican School and the Methodist School, at Ogbe, his early school days were difficult ones, for he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, as the saying goes. Later, however, he went to school in Abeokuta, his mother's hometown and later still, he studied at Wesley College at Ibadan, with the intention of becoming a teacher. For some time, Chief Awolowo was a newspaper correspondent and was well known as a trade unionist. Indeed, he was one of the founders of the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria. He was also well known for his rigorous activities as a member of the Nigerian Youth Movement, but in later years he became one of its most ardent and strongest critics. Chief Awolowo had always insisted that Lagos is not Nigeria, and that national leadership would come from the provinces. By dint of hard work and the desire for higher learning, Chief Awolowo took and passed the British

Common Law (London) degree examination locally and later the LL.B. degree before becoming a Barrister of the Inner Temple, London. It was during this

period as a Law student that he wrote his provocative book, Path to Nigerian Freedom, in which he proclaimed the statement that shocked the nation that Nigeria was a geographical expression still yet to be welded into a nation. Chief Awolowo inspired the formation of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1948 and later formed the Action Group. When his party won the elections under the new ministerial constitution after defeating the NCNC, he became Minister of Local Government and finally Premier of Western Nigeria.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The North in the Eyes of the South

It is ironical that a region was despised and envied by its neighbors and compatriots simply on account of its size, economic potentials and political fortunes. Since 1914, when the British proclaimed the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria, the Southerners had in an admixture of anger and envy, despised the North for her God given grace and fortune. They wondered how an illiterate polity (from the perspective of western education) should have certain endowments without working for them. They also believed the North was inferior, basing their own superiority on achievements in western education. And they asked questions, some rhetorical which educated people should not ask, like:

- Why should the Northerners occupy such a vast land covering more than one and a half times the size of both the Eastern and Western Regions and the colony of Lagos put together? Why should the Northerners occupy a land of such vibrant vegetation and endless rolling countryside, where humans and animals coexist in such an unprecedented abundance and with a climate varying from semitropical in the southern extreme of the land and in the middle belt of the region, to Savannah and Sub-Savannah in the extreme North?

- Why should God give them an area with vast potential for growing both food and cash crops? Why should God Almighty give the Northerners such a diversified

geographical landscape with an almost inexhaustible variety of both natural and mineral resources, all exclusive to such a breed of people?

- Why should they have a luxuriantly vast landmass with two well-marked seasons- the dry season lasting from November to March and the rainy season from April to October?

- Why should the North, popularly called the Giant in the Sun, be a small paradise on earth?

- Why are all these entirely exclusive to Northerners?

As if to buttress their case, of the 983,766 sq. km of the Nigerian total landmass, four-fifth of it, all lay in the North to the tune of about 786,718 sq. kms. The South had a total landmass of 197,048 sq. Kms i.e., 20%. The North also accounts for more than 80% of the population of 140,003,542 as at the 2006 official National Census figures. These hard facts have been and would continue to be the first reason for the unprecedented envy and hatred directed against the Northerners by their compatriots in the remaining regions. But, couldn't they pause to think that the Northerner did not just drop from heaven, like rainfall to occupy this vast land? That it was not as if someone herded them, moulded them into the present powerful group they now command in order to overwhelm or lord it on their compatriots in the sister regions? That they did it through sheer pluck, through self discipline and centuries of political development and empire building. What the North has achieved today in terms of landmass and population is a product of ethnic amalgamation, in some cases, through wars of conquest dating back to the first millennium (see maps 1 & 2). This is a historic feat the south failed to match before the advent of the colonialists.

In retrospect, the North was despised because of the South's inability to checkmate the region on three major political issues of the northernization policy, self rule and independence, and the majority leverage of the Northem Party, NPC.

When Nigeria became a Federation in 1954, it portrayed clearly a collective will for the fulfillment of a common destiny. It was a good opportunity for unity in diversity between the Hausa/Fulani and other communities of the North; the Yorubas of the West and the Igbos of the East. It was selfishness through tribalism that prevented the regi germination of that ideal, so much so that, with the passage of time, the Hausa man continued to see himself as Northern Nigerian, the Yoruba as a Western Nigerian, and the Igbo as an Eastern Nigerian. Boundaries were clearly cut by nature. The Rivers Niger and Benue restricted people by and large in their original places of abode. Therefort. regional nationalism started and flourished. Little attention was paid to the likely danger this could pose to the country's overall unity..

With the passage of time, the regional boundaries became more open, the people became more educated and enlightened and by implication, more politically assertive and demanding. The average man knew little of the other regions as he was methodically indoctrinated to shut his eyes to the things that emanated from them, especially if they were at variance with what their elites considered as proper.

The average man was made to see more, hear more and feel more, the pulse of his own region than that of the entire nation. His region was his own, the ancestral home of his compatriots and his own family. The Regional Government was his own government with

the responsibility of giving him work, healthcare, security, social amenities, education, in short, the good things of life. As the average man saw his regional government as the bastion of his very existence, he allowed the image of that government to grow large in his imagination, and the fire of regional nationalism to burn more fiercely in him. He was ready to be the true son of his region, to live and die for it.

As independence for Nigeria meant nigerianization, so self-rule for the regions meant regionalization. The three regions of the North, the East and the West, competed to out-do one another in the race to improve the lot of their people and thereby impress them with the prospect of more and better things to come.

The regions chose self-government so as to consolidate the gains of regionalization. The East and the West, far ahead of the North educationally (in the western sense of the word), were the first to achieve this objective in May 1957. Their respective leaders Dr. Nmandi Azikwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, led their parties to the London Constitutional Conference where they successfully negotiated for regional self-government. The attainment of self-government was celebrated with pomp and pageantry in the two regions.

The North came later to join the two regions in March 1959 in the self-government fraternity. The pathfinder of the region, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardaua of Sokoto, led his people in celebrating the attainment of self-rule in grand style. The much publicized occasion attracted dignitaries from within and outside the country including political leaders of the two other regions and representative

of the Queen of England. In his speech on the occasion, the Sardaua minced no words when he told all and sundry that the North was prepared to start on its own course and mould its own destiny. He said the North was going to look inwards in perfecting its government structures and system.

*In this region, we have always prided ourselves in the efficiency of our traditions and institutions. I think we are justified in holding this view, but let us not be so complacent as to suppose that we have a perfect system. Our forefathers had built these institutions by a long and painful process of trial and error. They have now become our legacy from the past.*

The import of this message was not lost on all present, especially leaders of the two other regions, who sensed that the Sardaua, with steadfast possessiveness, was going to embark on home-made system in running his region. With self-rule well in place in all the regions, work was put on double pace to fine-tune the regionalization procedures. Naturally, therefore, all the regions wanted their affairs firmly in the hands of their people. The East and the West, with the advantage of western education and self-rule, had successfully finished regionalizing their public service and were even 'exporting' manpower to the North. In other words, the East had already Easternized, and West Westernized, and it remained only for he North to Northernize. When eventually the North decided to northernize like the two others, the region was despised and condemned by the other regions. Seeing the enormity of the responsibility before him, the Sardaua had declared a northernization policy to regionalize his own region. There should be nothing wrong with this; especially as the other regions had

done the same and what remained to be regionalized in those two other regions were infinitesimal and inconsequential. "Self-government" he stressed, "can only be demanded and obtained when its meaning is fully understood by the masses of the Country". The outcome of this historic stand of the Premier was to find expression in the London Constitutional Conference of 1957, during which the North was to have first self-government in March 1957 and Nigeria to be granted independence in March 1960. The three years (1957-1960) were to be utilized by the North to train her indigenes in such numbers and areas as to enable them to participate effectively in the running of the affairs of the center.

## The Northernisation Policy

The task of recruitment, training and retaining of Northerners with requisite basic qualifications and Federal service was so formidable, given the time limit and experience to meet up with the challenges of Regional and availability of suitable persons that a special radical and progressive policy had to be formulated. This was popularly known in the country, though to the consternation of many, as the "Northernization Policy". In simple terms, the northernization policy meant massive recruitment and training of Northerners in all spheres of government services. This also included the in-service transfer to the central government. For on-the-job training, Northerners already in the service were to be posted to positions where they were to work and under study their senior European Officers, whom they would later replace. In order not to stop further posting or engagement of Northerners, all vacant posts in the civil service were to be filled on acting capacities and contract by non-Northerners. This

policy also extended to sensitive services in the Army, and the Nigeria Police Force. Special bodies were directed to attract young Northerners fresh from colleges and secondary schools into the armed forces and the police. So it was that the North, under the dynamic leadership of the indefatigable Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, left no stone unturned in the effort to meet up the challenge to get the North fully integrated into the Federal Service. Instead of commending the Sardauna for implementing what they collectively approved for him to do, they (the Southerners), ironically became the first to raise very serious objections to the way and manner in which the Sardauna was trying to honour his pledge.

In his book titled **BUT ALWAYS AS FRIENDS**, Sir Brian Sharwood Smith, the last Colonial Governor of Northern Nigeria, states that:

*…. a fruitful source of friction dilatory in certain departments by putting into effect what was termed the NORTHERNIZATION POLICY... Political parties in the South had for long pressed for complete replacement through out the country of British Officials by Nigerians, but Northern leaders had explained that this 'Nigerianization' would mean 'Southernisation', and they would have nothing to do with it.*

"How would you feel", one eminent personality told a journalist, "if your civil service, your Railways, your Post and Telegraph offices and your Electricity undertakings are exclusively manned by foreigners? We must trajn our own people, and when they are trained, we must be sure that the posts they should fill are not already in the hands of Southerners. That was the solution that would pave way for the attainment of independence in 1960 and therefore

should have been accepted by the South with commendation".

The Northerners, therefore, insisted that in future, posts requiring particular qualifications must be the exclusive preserve of their own people. Other posts requiring special qualifications, must only be filled from outside when no Northerner in any suitable way was available. Any such importations must, if possible, come from Britain or from other foreign sources, for they would in due course return to their homeland. Only if there were no alternative source of supply would they be recruited from the Eastern or Westem regions.

The real grouse of the Southerners about the northernization policy was the goodness it held for the North and the near perfection of its substance. They had wickedly termed it as a kind of bonanza for the Northerners, but they were powerless to do any thing about it.

There was no way of retaliating, if the North kicked out Southern workers in the Northern Civil Service, both the West and the East could not do the same with Northen workers in the South, because There ***Were no Northern Workers in the South***.

The other sore point was that the North's policy was going to pitch the Northerner against the Easterner. As the North eased out workers of southern origin from its payroll to make room for Northerners, Easterners were sacked in the West to make room for the Westerners who were sacked from the North. The denouement is that the East had only an inconsequential number of Westerners on its payroll. But the bitterness and intrigues notwithstanding,

the North had already made up its mind and there was no going back

Besides, it would be degrading for the North to allow others to run her affairs for her, especially in a competitive political complexity such as the Nigeria of that time. I have cause to refer once again to D. O. Owoyele's write up on Regionalization. He said inter alia:

*The other regions had secured most of the front seats everywhere in Nigeria before the North had any idea there was a show on. Consequently, after the partition of Nigeria and during the subsequent scramble for territorial gain, the East found itself a region of Easterners, the west of Westerners, the North a sort of no-man's-land. People walked into offices in the north and were not sure whether they were in the East or the West.*

*No self-respecting region would sit back and allow others to run its government machinery for it. That would be tantamount to an admission of inferiority, laziness and ineptitude. The North is only anxious to keep up with the political Jones's, to prove that she doesn't have to lean on anybody, to demonstrate that she is not only willing but able to make its government a going concern without undue reliance on others. Knowledge and ability can be learnt, but experience won't be got through reading any amount of textbooks. Say what you will, there are very few experienced top grade Northerners in the northern employ"*

The northernization policy was so successful that all right thinking people commended the Northern leadership for that singular feat which was to

propel the region into the position of an enviable partner in the business of running the Nigerian state. The Northern Nigerian official repor had chronicled the major highlights of the success of the policy in its 1962 report.

Both the East and West started pouring insults and condemnation on the Sardauna. They accused him of all sorts of ills. Accusations of being a United Kingdom stooge, a regionalist, and a religious fanatic were very common. They said that by giving Northerners preference over Southerners in the North, he was dividing the country and making Southerners second class citizens in Nigeria. Ironically, at that point in time, even to this day, (forty six years after the Sardauna), there was not up to one percent of people of northern origin in public services in either the East or the West. The Sardauna was not the problem. The problem was the system. The system provided that you took care of your own people at the region. But the South and their press mischievously and shamelessly chose to ignore this basic fact. Looking at the situation in retrospect, one could not fail to agree that what was happening in Nigeria was that, even though the South appeared to be more literate than the North in western education, when it comes to the process of taking decisions and logic of application, the Northern elite and the Northern society, generally, are always more mature and forthcoming. Sir Brian Sharwood Smith, in But Always As Friends states that:

*……..there was the essentially civilized approach of Northern Muslims of those days to human problems. They disliked extravagant behaviour and set their fears on anything that tended to destroy the self-respect of the individual or to bring shame upon community.*

The point should also be made that it was in accordance with the joint desire of both the South and the North to integrate for a common objective of attaining independence in 1960, that the policy of training, transferring and direct recruitment of Northerners into various arms of the central government was effected. But this as we know, became the very basis for condemnation about how the North had gone about it successfully. For one thing, the South was fully aware that without the North's cooperation, the expected year of independence might be extended, a prospect which they were seriously and totally committed not to accept. In fact, a strong suspicion existed in the minds of the Southerners that there had been some kind of conspiracy between the Northern leadership and their British 'Masters' to prolong the date of independence for the benefit of the colonial masters.

On several occasions and in various southern publications, accusing fingers were pointed at the Secretary to the Premier of Northern Region, Mr. Bruce Great batch, as well as a host of other high-ranking British officers in various sensitive posts in the North. Their presence in the armed forces and the police too, did not escape severe attacks from Southern papers, especially the Daily Times and the West African Pilot. The strong belief of the South was that there were enough Southern officers to take over from these administrators as well as army and police officers. It will be recalled that just before independence, an expatriate European Police Commissioner, was reported to have said to the Nigerian Press that, it would still take Nigeria some eight years before the country could produce a well-trained Police Commissioner. The poor gentleman was taken to task by the Southern press to the extent that he was requested to resign or to be

retired (for telling the truth). However, history had vindicated the officer because, ten years before independence, not less than 70% of the Police Commissioners that were hurriedly promoted before independence had left the police service because they could not shoulder the increased and complex responsibility Nigeria gave birth to. Swept out too, were the old officers who served under Ironsi but found it difficult to cope with the demands of independence.

It was in the same vein that new challenges emerged, requiring new forces. Gone were the days when officers spent half of their thirty years of service drinking in well-polished Officers Mess and shooting ranges. The new independent Nigeria demanded real soldiering attitude with live bullets hitting men and not dummies. That was the message the expatriate Police Commissioner was trying to tell Nigerians before independence but most of them were too narrow minded, inexperienced and over anxious to grab power unjustifiably in order to dominate the North than understand the message.

# CHAPTER THREE

## The Attainment of Independence in October 1960

In spite of untold insults, jeers and organized political as well as physical attacks directed against the people of Northern Nigeria both at home and abroad during the independence debates, the North eventually triumphed. First, the colonial power was convinced by the Northern argument and respected its view point at the last London conference that the British government approved that the North be granted self rule in 1959 and for the whole of Nigeria to have independence on 1st October 1960. Both historical events came to pass successfully, but only with a bitterness and deep rooted contempt of the North and its people by our southern compatriots. I have already mentioned the federal elections of December 1959, the result of which shocked the Southerners and made them hate the North more. For political and administrative convenience, the NPC allied with the NCNC and formed the post-independence Government of Nigeria.

To improve and consolidate our freedom, Nigeria requested and obtained Republican status in October 1963. This new and more enhanced status was brought about by the ruling majority party from the North i.e. Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), with its eastern based ally, the NCNC headed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe and the Action Group Party from the Western Region (AG), headed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The

argument for a Republican State was predicated on the sound premise that Nigeria independence which tied the country to the apron strings of wanted total independence as against monarchial the British Crown. This would have been anomalous and inconsistent with the spirit of independence and freedom and embarrassing to Nigeria in many visible ways. For example, that a sovereign independent country would have to apply to the Queen of England, several thousands of miles away, to approve the appointment of and accreditation of our High Commissioners and Ambassadors to Commonwealth, and other countries because Her Majesty was both the Head of Commonwealth and Queen of Nigeria. That the Nigerian Government was only an accredited representative of the Queen of England. So Nigeria made her point, strongly drawing from the examples of India and Pakistan both members of the Commonwealth, who had declared their independence and Republican Status.

The Republican arrangement saw the Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Leader of the NPC, in the National Assembly emerging as the Prime Minister with full executive powers, while Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, the leader of the NCNC, in the centre, became the first post-colonial President of Nigeria. The post of the leader of the opposition went to Chief Obafemi Awolowo who had relinquished the Premiership of the Western Region to his trusted political deputy in the Action Group, Chief S. L. Akintola, in preference to going to the centre. Despite serious internal problems within each party, all the parties managed to come together to attain the republican status.

# The Action Group Crisis

No sooner had the celebrations for the attainment of the republican status been over, than the full weight of trouble in the Action Group party (A.G) began to manifest itself. The external issue, was centered on whether or not the leadership of the party in the centre should cooperate with the ruling coalition of NPC/NCNC in order to derive maximum benefits for the A.G as a party, as well as the people of the West who chose the party. In all camps of the A.G, opinion differed. White national leader of the party, Chief Obafemi Awolowo believed earlier, was promoting a resolute defiance and non compromise with the Federal Government on the one hand, some of the party's staunch supporters on the other hand, were secretly craving for a conciliatory stand so that the goodies of the central Government would go round. The second serious disquiet was an emerging leadership struggle between the leader of the party in the center and his former deputy who was now Chief Executive and Premier of the West, Chief S.L. Akintola. In a nutshell, Chief Awolowo believed earlier, that before handing over the Premiership of the West to his supposed loyal and trusted deputy, Chief S. L. Akintola, the latter would continue to play the second fiddle in the running of affairs in the West. But he did not reckon with the incumbency factor and power culture. Chief Akintola rightly felt and believed that, subject only to the principles of their party as contained in their manifesto, he as the Chief Executive, must play the role provided for in both the Party's constitution as well as the Nigerian Constitution which he swore to defend. In other words, he was the number one citizen in the Western region, and his wife was of course the First Lady, take it or leave it. Consequently, in his attempt to assert that

constitutional right, Akintola found himself stepping on swollen toes and this was to precipitate what led to serious national crisis.

At this point of the crisis, the party had been factionalised as most of the party's elected members in the Federal Parliament rallied round Awolowo, and Akintola drew his support from the majority of the Western Region House of Assembly members of the party. What seemed like the last straw that broke the camel's back were the treasonable felony and conspiracy charges levelled by the Federal Government against Chief Awolowo and some of his staunch aides. After a long drawn legal battle, the Action Group Leaders were found guilty of financial impropriety in their dealings with six financial companies, especially the National Bank, the Western Nigeria Finance Company and the National Investment property Company. They were also found guilty on the treasonable charge of trying to overthrow the Government of the country.

The unending tug-of-war between the leadership of the party of the Action Group and the new Premier of the West did not abate. The crisis continued to escalate, leading to the declaration of a state of emergency in the West when a free for all fight took place in the regional Assembly accompanied by a breakdown of law and order among the Honourable Members. The Federal Government, to their dismay, found that the Akintola and Awolowo factions in the House could no longer work together in peace. To compound the AG's problems, its political allies started terminating their alliance with the party. Probably, the most painful to the party, especially at that period of turmoil, was the event of the 6th of November 1962, when the Borno Youth Movement (BYM) decided to end its alliance because:

*"The party does not believe in violence and extra constitutional means to achieve its political ambition. The party also does not support any party or body of persons wishing to impose themselves on the People of Northern Nigeria by use of force or any other means which are unconstitutional"*

The BYM also stressed that Borno province had its fair share of the quota of appointments from the regional government of Sir Ahmadu Bello, citing instances such as the appointment of Sir Kashim Ibrahim as the first indigenous Governor of the region; Alhaji Abba Jiddum Gana, the first Agent General of the Region in the United Kingdom; Alhaji Kam Selem, the first Regional Commissioner of Police (later Inspector General), six Ministers and several others from the province. As the movement ceased to be a political party, it directed all its members to declare for the NPC and called all Northerners of goodwill to do the same, so as to rally round a common cause, especially in the light of the political developments in the country then.

In order to give peace a chance, it became imperative for the Tafawa Balewa Federal Government to declare a state of emergency in the Western Region and consequently, appointed Dr Majekodunmi as the Sole Administrator to supervise the affairs of the Region.

## More Crises

Meanwhile, the 1963 Unified Federal Census figures, which Nigerians thought would be a thing of pride to the national psyche, especially coming after independence, became a ready political tool in the hands of some unscrupulous people. The cause of the brouhaha this time was that the census showed that

the North maintained its majority over the rest of the country-perhaps the opponents of the state of affairs knew where they were coming from. Just before the census, Northerners cried out that Easterners were leaving the North in their hundreds for home-to be counted among the eastern population, and by implication, broaden the region's electoral fortunes. This strategy did not seem to pay-off as the authenticated figures showed that the North kept its superiority in size and number.

**Northern Nigeria** - - - - - - - - - 29,777,986

**Eastern Nigeria** - - - - - - - - - - 12,388,646

**Western Nigeria** - - - - - - - - - - 10,278,500

**Mid Western Nigeria** - - - - - - 2,533,337

**Lagos Territory** - - - - - - - - 675,352

The total figure of all the regions of Nigeria and Lagos minus the North totaled 25,875,835, which gave the North a majority of 3,902,151.

The opposition challenged this final table in court through the action of the NCNC Government in the East. The motion against the Federal Government was filed after the NCNC Ministers in the Federal Government had accepted the figures along with the Federal Cabinet. The motion was eventually thrown out with costs, after the Federal Supreme Court had upheld the counter motion of the Federal Government which urged the Court to dismiss the action on the grounds that it was not competent to proceed with such a motion, as one brought up by the Eastern Government.

The Eastern premier had boasted repeatedly that he would never accept the census figures apparently because they did not fit in with his political arithmetic of winning the forthcoming elections for UPGA in 1964/65.

## The 1964/65 Federal Elections

As the tension caused by the Action Group was growing, the time came for a new Federal election. This election was crucial in two perspectives. Firstly, it was the first national election after Nigeria's attainment of a Republican status. Secondly, it was the first to be conducted by Nigerians for Nigerians. This was because all previous elections, whether regional, local or national were conducted by or under the close supervision of the former colonial officials, whom Nigerians called by different bad names and sent away. The implication was that the eyes and ears of the whole world were on Nigeria to see whether it could shoulder this heavy responsibility independently. The outside world and some Nigerians too, were anxious to see whether the country, without its European masters, was capable of discharging one of the responsibilities of the hard-fought-for-and-won democracy and freedom. Therefore, without wasting more time on the subject, Nigeria was, at last, able to hold a post independence election in November/December 1964.

For the purpose of this election, the ruling Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) formed an alliance with the Akintola faction of the Action Group, which

had by now transformed into the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). On the opposing side was the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), made up of the Awolowo faction of the AG and the NCNC. There were also factions of the UMBC and the Mallam Aminu Kano NEPU that went into that alliance with what they called the Northern Progressive Front (NPF). The UPGA, as a political party, was seen by men of goodwill as a misnomer. Yorubas counseled their brothers on the unnaturalness of the alliance, especially because of its capacity for causing disaffection and disharmony across geographical divides. The AG and the NCNC were said to be incompatible when it came to political belief and ideology. The alliance could only be for gains- the sharing of which could bring trouble and acrimony. Other Yorubas saw the Igbo as trying to play their trump card in their scheme to dominate the entire southern political terrain. UPGA, they said, was a strategic Igbo plan to master the South, recalling that the NCNC had earlier gone into alliance with the ruling NPC but broke it in a breach of faith. They further argued that if the NCNC could break that association, then it must have a hidden agenda in its partnership with the A.G. It was also recalled that the UPGA, through the NCNC did tremendous damage to the political psyche of the Mid Western Region; seeing the Government installed there were largely Igbo, with Chief Dennis Osadebey as Premier, sidelining the majority tribes of the region-Bini Urhobo, Ishan and Itsekiri. The most unnatural phenomenon of the whole saga, was when both the A.G. and the N.C.N.C chose that period of serious campaigns for the crucial elections, to open up their cans of worms and to throw vituperations at each other. Both parties, as if under an inexplicable spell, took each other to the cleaners. The sensational revelations made newspaper headlines.

All these notwithstanding, the UPGA went to that election as if their house was in order. The NNA on the other hand, had swelled its membership as the crucial elections approached. Apart from the ruling NPC and Chief Akintola's NNDP, other parties in the alliance included the main Midwestern opposition, the MDF, and also the Niger Delta Congress from the East. The leaders of the four parties believed that a party or an alliance of parties, which transcended regional boundaries, NCNC and tribal jingoism, should win the very important federal elections. NNC presented Nigeria with an answer to the country's question on unity. It is very important to mention here that the Federal Government chose about that time to appoint two NNDP leaders and respected Yoruba statesmen into the Federal cabinet. Those appointed were Chief Ayo Rosiji and Chief Adisa Akinlove. This final masterstroke did the ultimate damage to what remained of UPGA.

One person who inadvertently contributed to the erosion who succeeded Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as the Premier of the of values in our political landscape was Dr. Michael Okpara Eastern Region and the leader of the **NCNC**. The Medical Director was young, ambitious and tribalistic. His party, the **NCNC** which had been in the vanguard of those who fought and won independence for Nigeria, degenerated into an amalgam of hard core tribalists and segregationists, whose main aim was to capture power in the center at all costs. The spirit behind the party and the priceless contributions and sacrifices of the founding fathers, Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe, were all reduced to the mundane whims of the young Doctor's wishful optimism, who in a very short time succeeded in turning the party into a sole Igbo political machine.

Youthful exuberance employed elsewhere as a powerful tool for integration and progress, became the very instrument used by Okpara for polarizing his party and reducing it to fragments of tribal unions all existing under the vast Igbo empire.

The young doctor was also a dreamer or a weaver of dreams, with a growing frantic ambition to reach where he could not reach. His attempt to penetrate the core North, where the AG had failed, the attempt to replace the AG in the northern Plateau Region as the area's political "big brother" and the attempt to upstage the NPC through UPGA, were all pointers to his political innocence. Youthful exuberance, definitely doused the young man's grey cells to the extent that their potency was completely weakened. If not, he would have considered the cerebral superiorty of the Sardauna of Sokoto, leader of the NPC and the NNA, before attempting this huge and unrealizable adventure.

To my mind, the sudden realization that the players in the NPC and NNA alliance were masters of the game was too much for his young mind. His inability to prepare for a possible reversal of fortunes, led him to recklessness and misadventure. His failure to lead the UPGA to capture the West, was enough to show Okpara that his opponents were indeed formidable and taking power from them needed more than empty boasts and pseudo nationalism; that his own superiors in both the NCNC and AG were really defeated by their own superiors in the NPC; that the defeats were not mere flukes but the result of good planning and methodical calculations.

I believe that it was at this stage that Michael Okpara became restless and desperate, and it must be

at this stage that he, together with his ilk in the Igbo empire, started perfecting their plans to take power by hook or crook. The role of the press in this period of political tension was, to say the least despicable. Diatribes, open insults and provocative statements became the order of the day. Drum Magazine, the Outlook, and the Eastern Nigerian Broadcasting Service (ENBS), fanned embers of hate and disunity with the quality of what they gave out to the Nigerian public. All right thinking people saw the potential of such write-ups and broadcasts for trouble and called for restraint. The Morning

Post of 27th July 1964 joined in this call when it said inter alia:

*"The least one can say about Mr. Ajuluchukwu's piece in the OUTLOOK is that it is a catechism of hate directed not at uniting the country, but at inspiring distrust and bitterness among our people. Even if allowance was made for the profanity and the often intolerable brashness for which this particular columnist is now well known it is at least honest that his choice of words in his 'BY THE GRACE OF ALLAH' is an unpardonable abuse of freedom to use the dictionary. The whole piece, indeed, cannot be ignored as just the 'one wrong"*

Even the dynamic leader of NEPU and Vice President of the NCNC, Mallam Aminu Kano, once just a few months to the December 1964 Federal Elections, described as outrageous and flagrant disregard of personalities in the North by the OUTLOOK. He out-rightly blamed the paper for the disaffection in the country and maintained in strong terms, the right of any patriotic Northerner to defend the North from such outlandish characters as the Columnist of the

OUTLOOK. He was referring to Mr. M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu, whose constant and persistent attacks on the northern personalities were interpreted as dire provocation as against constructive criticism or opinions.

But the voices of Mallams Aminu Kano, Ibrahim Imam, and others could not restrain the Southerners, especially the intelligent ones among them, who had the capacity to foresee the possible defeat of their last political bastion, the UPGA, in the coming elections. The insults and abuse were pushing the Northerners to the wall and passions were swelling. The most painful to them was the attack on the Sardau na- man respected for his sagacity even by

the NCNC allies in the North. At a point, the "Nigerian Citizen" too had to lend its voice to the call for restraint in its editorial of 19th August, 1964.

The Igbos have decided to take up responsibility since the Yorubas have failed. After all, they were the worst hit by the resounding success of the Sardauna's northernization policy, one of the actual reasons for the coup that was to follow...

The climax was the natural conclusion. The success of the sequence of events from 1952 had been at variance with the prescience claims of superiority of the South over the North. The solution was the termination of the northern political advancement. But as the political solution itself failed, the southern consternation turned to despair and finally to desperation.

## The Climax of the Action Group Crisis

The final result of the Federal election saw the NPC/NNDP alliance winning with an increased majority, while the Action Group and its allies became second as the opposition party. In the West, the Akintola faction of the A.G. and the NNDP too emerged as undisputed winners. Now, instead of Nigerians accepting and congratulating themselves for a job well done (as not many foreigners believed that Nigeria could conduct the first post independence election successfully), the Awolowo faction of the Action Group put up a serious contest by rejecting the election results. Things did not stop there as the party leaders went about inciting their political hooligans to ignite a spate of mayhem. Within a few weeks, thuggery, vandalism and hooliganism were introduced. The thugs and other agents of anarchy rose quickly, having been trained and organized to wreak havoc on people especially of northern origin residing in Lagos, whether they belonged to any political party or not.

## More Contempt

The southern contempt for the North as a result of the northernization policy reached this ridiculous crescendo when what was known as Operation Wetie was introduced. It was a campaign code of intimidation and elimination of all people of northern origin roaming the streets of Lagos or living in the low income areas. The method was simple- a group of hooligans would organize a street harassment campaign by spraying innocent Northerners with petrol and subsequently setting them on fire. Operation Wetie showed their total rejection and dislike of Northerners in Lagos. They did not stop there; some hooligans, acting on directives from

their political mentors, took the law and order into their hands, first by declaring a nationwide strike at the Railway Corporation and the P. & T. During and after this strike, the country was prevented from enjoying peace. Political thugs of the Action Group way-laid vehicles from the North sprayed anybody in Hausa dress with petrol and set them on fire. Their houses and their hideouts were not spared either. Houses targeted for burning were selected and marked with special signs at night or at day time before the operation. A ransom might be requested and if up to the time of destruction it was not paid, the operation would be carried out. At that point in time, I was a Police Detective serving in C.I.D. and was an eye witness. An eyewitness to the gory events explains the mode of operation of the Action Group thugs:

The mode of operation of the Action Group thugs was to recruit and train young boys, (fore runners to the present day area boys), to move into busy streets armed with only two simple but very lethal weapons-a bottle of petrol and a matchbox. As soon as they sighted any person dressed in Hausa dress of flowing gowns with the appropriate cap to match, one of the leading boys would shout the signal of "wetie". He would then sprinkle the petrol on the apparel of his northern victim. Next, his colleagues, following him with a matchbox, would instantaneously ignite the victim. Within seconds the latter would be engulfed in flames and set off running helter-skelter seeking for rescue, which would never be given by the happy crowd of Lagos citizens, until he fell dead! Other thugs would take pains to mark the residences of all northern Nigerians at night.

Once your residence was marked, some irresponsible hooligans would ring you up or even walk to your residence and demand a ransom. Failure to pay the

ransom would result in your residence being set ablaze.

Some time in 1965, it became a reality that no Northerners or their families were safe in Lagos and the Western region. In fact, but for the enormous courage displayed by the people of northern origin, all of them would have run away from Lagos to the North for their physical safety and that of their property. I was an eye witness to one of such gruesome acts of barbarism when Senator Ibrahim Dimis of Bauchi and his friend Alhaji Sani from the same province were nearly burnt to death when they came to Lagos to visit the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. I was then among the special plain clothes men transferred to Lagos from the Northern Police Command with the assignment to fight this awesome political monster of the Action Group in Nigeria.

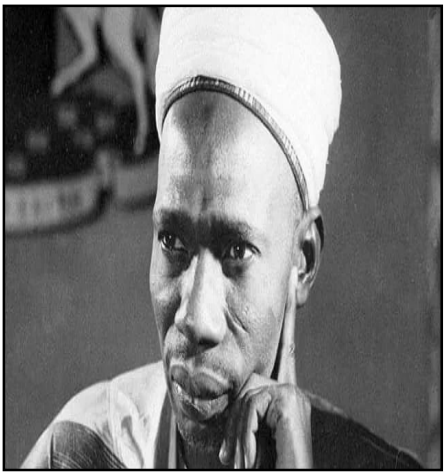
But for a great mark of courage and discipline from the northern civil servants working in Lagos, as well as their relations, they would have abandoned their jobs and returned home. In fact, one of the proofs of the level of maturity displayed by the Northerners then, could be seen in their reaction to the **operation 'wetie'** in 1964, as compared to the reaction of the Igbo during the Kano uprising of 1966, i.e. the '**Araba**' episode, against mainly the Igbos resident in Kano and some other towns in the North such as Gusau, Sokoto, and Kaduna etc during which the entire Igbo communities packed their bags and baggage and left the North to return to the eastern region. The Northerners who were earlier on subjected to the same burning, looting and lynching by mainly Action Group thugs, remained in Lagos in spite of the threat of anarchy and attempt of annihilation of their kinsmen. The real intention of

the South then was, using sheer force of intimidation, to frighten the Northerners out of Lagos so that the implementation of the policy would at least, be slowed down, if not halted entirely, since the Northerners would refuse to take up employment at the federal level for fear of their dear lives.

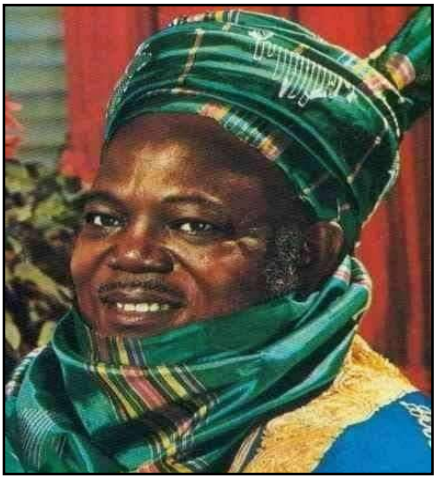
## Climax of Igbo Hostility

The awesome criminal action of the thugs continued and finally climaxed on the 15th January 1966, when Nigerians woke up early in the morning only to face new monsters in the persons of an infamous group of five young Igbo majors, who thought that the Yoruba political thugs were not performing their assignment of liquidating Northerners fast enough. In a swift operation, the five Igbo Majors toppled the Federal Government of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as well as those of the northern and western Regions, leaving their own Region of the East intact. They also made sure that they murdered the Prime Minister (Head of the Federal Government) Premiers of the North and West who were the heads of the respective Governments of their Regions and many important senior military officers and politicians of northern and western origin.

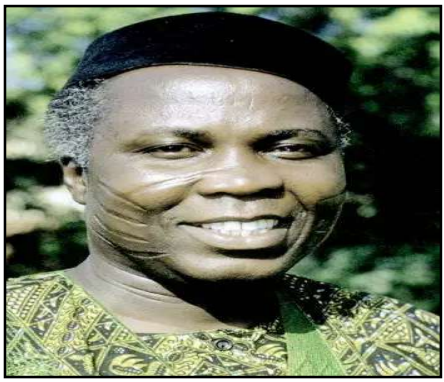
## The Important Nigerian Civilians Murdered by the Cowardly Igbo Majors in the January 15th 1966 Coup



ALHAJI SIR ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA - NIGERIA'S FIRST AND ONLY PRIME MINISTER. HE WAS ALSO KNOWN AS THE GOLDEN VOICE OF AFRICA BECAUSE OF HIS POWER OF SPEECH DELIVERY



ALHAJI SIR AHMADU BELLO** – SARDAUNAN SOKOTO – FIRST AND ONLY PREMIER OF NORTHERN NIGERIA. ACCLAIMED TO BE THE MOST POWERFUL POLITICIAN IN THE COUNTRY



CHIEF S.L. AKINTOLa – PREMIER OF THE WESTERN REGION. KILLED FOR BEING AN ALLY OF THE NORTH AND PARTNER IN THE NNA

CHIEF FESTUS OKOTI-EBOH – NIGERIA'S FINANCE MINISTER. KILLED BECAUSE HE ALLIED WITH THE NORTH

# CHAPTER FOUR

# The Remote and Immediate Causes of the Civil War: July 1967-December 1970

## The January 15TH 1966 Coup

I witnessed the sad events of 15h January 1966 in Lagos. Prior to this mournful day that threatened to tear the country apart, there were indications that, something sinister and really threatening the survival of our dear country was in the offing. This was evidenced by the unhealthy political conflicts between the Government of the ruling party (the Northern Peoples Congress, NPC) headed by the Prime Minister of the Federation, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and the opposition party (the Action Group, AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. These incessant political crises gained more impetus following the Western Regional elections, which were won by the Chief Akintola faction of the Action Group in alliance with the NPC in 1965. The victory of Akintola in the election, infuriated opponents who were bent on making it impossible for him to govern the Region. Some dissident army officers cashed in on the situation and took over the mantle of leadership in a bloody coup which led to the brutal assassination of the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Akintola himself, Chief Okoti Eboh and top military officers of northern and western origin. They included the following:

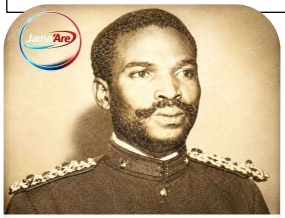
## Most Senior Military Officers Killed by the Murdering Majors on January 15th 1966

BRIG.SAMUEL ADEMULEGUN Killed by the coupists for being an ally of the North and Nigeria

COL. SHODEINDE Killed by the murdering majors because could be a threat to them.

BRIG ZAKARI MAIMALARI Killed by the murdering

MRS. ADEMULEGUN Killed in bed by the coupists alongside her husband



LT COL. KUR MUHAMMED

He was killed because he was a Northerner

COL. JAMES YAKUBU PAM The cowardly majors didn't spare him even if he was a Christian

COL. ABOGO LARGEMA It didn't matter to the murdering majors that he was a peace loving soldier. They killed him in cold blood-because he was a Northerner

1. Brigadier M. Maimalari ---------- North
2. Col. Yakubu Pam ---------- North
3. Col. Kur Muhammed ---------- North
4. Col. Abogo Largema ---------- North
5. Brigadier Ademulegun ---------- West
6. Colonel Shodeinde Lt. ---------- West
7. Lt. Colonel Unegbo ---------- (East) - who was killed because he refused to hand over the keys to the armoury. No other Igbo officer was killed or threatened.

The only Senior Military officer of the rank of a Lieutenant Colonel from the entire North who was not killed was Yakubu Gowon. This was because, about the time of the coup, he was supposed to be on a course in the U.K. but, unknown to the coup plotters, he had returned to Nigeria on the night of 14h January himself completely unaware ofthe serious plot the Igbo Officers had hatched.

Our first experiment on democratic governance was thus prematurely strangulated by the very attitude of the political elite who exhibited a high sense of immaturity, lack of foresight and uncompromising postures. Inevitably, this gave rise to bickering, politics of bitterness and violence.

The January, 15th coup, during which prominent political leaders of the North and their colleagues in the West and Midwest, including the arch leader of the northernization policy, Sir Ahmadu Bello, were brutally 49 The Victors and the Vanquished ofthe Nigerian Civil War Usman Faruk murdered was the greatest acid test of the resilience of northern civil servants and the northern community in Lagos. There can never be such a parallel in the history of this country. The memory of this catastrophe remains indelible in the minds of those of us that witnessed it. Suffice it to say, I was fully involved in investigations into the issue. I was then a senior police detective at the Alagbon Close establishment at Ikoyi, Lagos. 1 must salute the Northerners courage

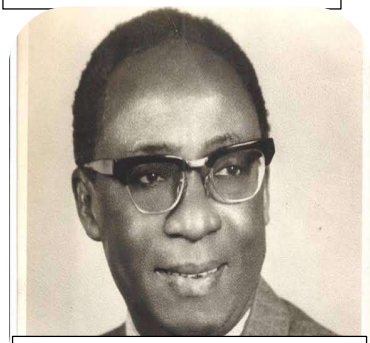
and unrivalled faith in God the Creator, in the face of this great adversity, irrespective of their religious leaning or ethnic background.

I once imagined what would have happened if the capital of Nigeria were Kaduna and that the Prime Minister was a Yoruba man or an Igbo man and he happened to be so wickedly killed by some Northerners in cold blood, as were Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Sardauna and the Northerners toppled his government. Would other Yorubas or Igbos continue staying anywhere in Kaduna either as civil servants or as businessmen? They would have, without any doubt, all fled back to their regions of origin for real or imaginary fear of their lives! If such an unfortunate development had taken place, both the Igbos and Yorubas would justify their non-return to Kaduna forever, for security reasons. But on the contrary and notwithstanding the death of Tafawa Balewa and the Sardauna, the bereaved northern civil servants in Lagos and elsewhere in the South on the 15th January 1966, even reported for duty at their respective offices in various locations. I certainly reported for duty together with all known northern colleagues; and even did more than that by shocking my neighbors mainly Yorubas by naming my son who was born on the 15th February 1966- Abubakar, a namesake of the assassinated Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. 1 did it at a time when Yorubas everywhere were formally competing 51 The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War Usman Faruk among themselves in changing their family names from Akintola to something else so that they would not be associated with that slain son ofthe Yoruba race.

**All these men were igbo and so were spared by the murdering majors because they were their kinsmen.**

DR. NNAMDI AZIKIWE PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA. He was conviniently absent when the killings were going on

SIR FRANCIS AKANU IBIAM GOVERNOR OF THE EASTERN REGION Lucky Man The Murdering Majors Were Igbo Like Him



CHIEF DENNIS OSADEBEY, The Igbo Man Who Became Premier Of The Midwest In Spite of All Others

DR. MICHEAL OKPARA PREMIER OF THE EASTERN REGION AND LEADER OF UPGA Another Lucky Igbo Man

We the entire members of the northern civil service appeared to be calm and were even exchanging banters with our colleagues when the order of the transmission of the national news was reversed in this order, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa as against the former arrangement. This served as an indication of the ascendancy of an Igbo oligarchy. Within this trying moment of our existence, following the vicious assassination ofTafawa Balewa and Sardauna, there was no mass exodus of people of northern origin, consequent upon real or imagined threat to their lives. Instead, we resigned our fate to God and bore the loss of our great leaders and our most senior army officers with fortitude.

The caution, restraint and maturity exhibited by Northerners during the course of these tragic events was such that it was misconstrued by Southerners to mean either lack of concern for the irreparable loss or that the Northerners were harbouring some sinister intention in their hearts. This view came to my knowledge while we were assigned to visit the scenes where the dead bodies of murdered northern military officers and other soldiers were found for official inspection as if the major events were routine homicide cases that we used to treat. I was SO busy with the assignment when I overheard two of my staff (Igbos), whispering to themselves that they were seriously disturbed by the countenance and reaction of their Oga (referring to me) vis-a-vis the coup. They alluded to the fact that the whole Criminal Investigation Department (CID) was observing my calm disposition with great fear and concern. They went on to make references to shades of views concerning my seemingly unemotional disposition.

## General Ironsi and his Military Governors January 1966

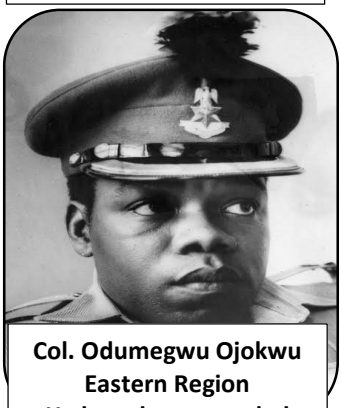
**General Aguiyi Ironsi**

Took Over After The Termination Of The Tafawa Balewa Government

**Col. Later Gen. Hassan Usman Katsina**

Northern Region

**Col. Later General David Ejoor**
**Midwestern region**



**Col. Odumegwu Ojokwu**
**Eastern Region**
**He later became rebel leader**

**Col. Adekunle Fajuyi**
**Western Region**

Some said, I remained unemotional because not many Northerners liked the way the Sardauna was handling the affairs of the North and by extension the nation, while majority felt I was hiding sometime dreadful in my heart,] believe these were the views that were prevailing in all ministries and departments where northern civil servants worked in Lagos and elsewhere in the South. We all went about our normal business as if nothing serious had happened. This attitude is attributable to our upbringing during which total trust in the Creator is properly ingrained in the child SO that we all grew up to believe that all events good or bad should be attributed to God-Who knows best why and how such events occurred.

In summary, the attitude of the majority of Northerners in the country as a whole was calm and dignified. There was absolute self-control and sense of maturity. Hence, as a result of their unique nature of courage against any adversity, the Northerners assumed the posture of wait-and- see. In addition, frayed nerves were further soothed, when General Aguiyi Ironsi, the new Head of State and supreme Commander, promised that those dissident officers in the army who took the law into their hands would be dealt with Although nobody in the North was impressed by this address, the North in its usual characteristic level headedness and foresight merely listened but never believed a word from the master hangman. But there were questions, such as the following that begged for answers.

- What were the real intentions of the coup makers?
- Was it not chauvinism and/or vendetta?
- If as the coup makers claimed, the coup was to rid the polity of corruption, why kill non-politicians?

- Why did the coup plotters kill politicians from Northern Nigeria and their families only and none from UPGA? The Premier of the West who was alleged to be friend and ally of the North, in the person of Akintola was also killed.
- Why was it necessary to kill senior military officers of northern origin, like Maimalaari, Abogo Largema, Kur Muhammed and James Yakubu Pam? Why did they kill Ademulegun and Shodeinde both senior Yoruba officers, but friends of the North? Unegbo, the Igbo officer was killed because he refused to surrender keys to the armoury.
- Why was the carnage limited to the North, West and Midwest alone, and not in the East?

Security Beef up with new Security Chiefs

ALHAJI KAM SELEM Alhaji Kom Selem Become Nigeria's Chief of Police In 1966 The Critical Period of Nigeria's Internal Crisis. He Was Able To Work With General Yakubu Gowon To Weather The Storm Of Political Crisis Before The Start of The Civil War.

ALHAJI USMAN FARUK The Police Officer In charge Kaduna Capital Territory Also Assumed Duty In Kaduna At The Critical Period of

Tension Following The Assassination of The North's Major Civilian And Military Leaders. In This Picture (January 1967) He addresses The Press On The Security Situation In The Country But In Kaduna In Particular.

i. **Decree No. 1 Of 1966**

While the North was anxiously awaiting action against the young majors as pledged by the Head of State, Decree No. 1 was suddenly promulgated, giving him sweeping powers on everything in Nigeria. A critical study of the decree showed that Igbo legal luminaries and their administrative top brass must have taken time long before, to consider the magnitude and sheer political power with which to clothe the long awaited deliverer or messiah that would lead them to the "promised land of the caliphate". In fact. it did not take Northerners long from the day Ironsi made his maiden address of 28h January, to understand the implications of the all-embracing powers of Decree No. 1 bestowed on the General. For instance, he had inherited all the powers of the defunct or suspended National Executive Council and the powers of the National Assembly (House of Representatives and the Senate). He was also to perform the functions of the Prime Minister as well as use powers of the President of the Senate and those of the President of Nigeria. He was the Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria as well as the Chairman of the Nigeria Police Council. The Supreme Military Council which the same decree created was only to serve as an advisory body to the new Supreme Commander. There was no fair representation in the council. The membership of the council was only made up of Governors who were to be, chosen and appointed by the Supreme Commander and Head of State. There was to be no voting on any matter. Everything must be left to the absolute whim and discretion of the Supreme Commander. With the powers of Decree No. 1 of 1966 the Supreme Commander immediately went ahead to appoint four Military Officers to head the four regions as Military Governors. The same decree had already suspended all the workings of the constitution both at Federal and

Regional levels. Then the ill-fated Unification Decree (No. 24) was also to swiftly sweep the nation into complete disarray. This was because the decree helped to confirm the misgivings of the North that the autonomy which regional constitutions had guaranteed was now lost. The Government therefore became bewildered over the spontaneous reactions in the North, because Ironsi never expected such to happen.

ii. **The Republican Constitution Decree No. 24 0f 1966**

This was what Decree No 24 stated:

The National Military Government hereby decrees as follows:

(a) The suspension of provisions of the Federation relating to the Office of the President, the establishment of parliament and of the Office ofthe Prime Minister.
(b) The suspension of the provisions of the 1 Constitutions of the Regions relating to the establishment ofthe Offices of regional Governors, Regions Premiers and Executive Councils and Regional Legislatures.

The National Military Government further decrees:

(a) That there shall be appointed a Military Governor in each Region of the Republic who shall be directly responsible to the National Military Government for the good government of the Region.
(b) The appointment as Adviser to the Military Governor of the Region, under the suspended provisions ofthe Constitution.

The National Military Government further decrees:

(a) that the Chief Justice and all holders of judicial appointments within the Federation shall continue to function under their existing statutes.
(b) That holders of appointments in the civil service of the Republic and

(b)

of the Regions shall continue to hold their appointments and to carry out their duties in the normal way and that similarly, the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Special Constabulary shall continue to exercise their functions in the normal way.

(c) That all Local Government Police Forces and Native Authority Police Forces shall be placed under the overall command of the Inspector General.

**Section Three**:

This section deals with the powers of the National Military Government and Provincial Military Governors to make laws:

- The National Military Government shall have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Nigeria or any part thereof, with respect to any matter whatsoever.
- The Military Governor of a group of Provinces (a) shall not have powers to make laws with respectto any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative List; and (b) except with prior consent of the National Military Government, shall not make any law in respect to any matter included in the concurrent Legislative List.
- Subject to sub-section (2) above, and the Constitution of the Republic, the Military Governor of a group of provinces was mandated to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of the provinces.
- Deals with laws that will prevail where there is a conflict.
- Deals with reserve powers of the Military Governor of a group 1 of provinces.

**Section Four:**

Deals with the mode of exercising Legislative powers by the National Government and the Military Government of a group of Provinces and in case of conflict which law will prevail.

**Section Five**:

Deals with the making and commencement of decrees, edicts and subsidiary instruments which means order, rules and regulations, rules of court or bye-laws made in exercist of powers conferred by a decree or an edict:

- A decree is made when it is signed by the Head of the National Military Government, whether or not it then comes into force.
- An edict is made when it is signed by the Military Governor of a group of Provinces to which it applies, whether or not it comes into force.

**Section Six**:

Deals with validity of Decrees and Edicts, "No question as to the validity of this or any other decree or of any edict shall be entertained by the court of law in Nigeria".

**Section Seven:**

Deals with the Executive authority of the Republic of Nigeria, which is vested in the Head of the Military Government and may be exercised by him either directly or through persons or authorities subordinate to him and the extent of the execution and maintenance of the Constitution.

**Section Eight**:

Deals with the establishment of Supreme Military Council and an Executive Council. The section says:

- There shall be for Nigeria, a Supreme Military Council and an Executive Council.

The Supreme Military Council shall consist of:

(a) The Head of the National Military Government, who shall be President of the Supreme Military Council.
(b) The Head ofthe Nigeria Army,
(c) The Head of the Nigeria Navy.
(d) The Head of the Nigeria Air Force.
(e) The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.
(f) The Chief of Staff of the Nigeria Army.
(g) The Military Governors of the Northern provinces, Eastern Provinces, Western Provinces and that of the Midwest
(h) The Attorney General of the Republic of Nigeria.

The Executive Council shall consist of:

(a) The Head of National Military Government, who shall be President of the Executive Council;

(c) The Head of the Nigeria Army;
(d) (The Head of the Nigeria Navy;
(e) The Head of the Nigeria Air Force;
(f) The Chief of Staffof the Armed Forces;

(g) The Chief of Staff of the Nigeria Army;
(h) The Attorney General ofthe Republic of Nigeria;
(i) The Inspector General and the Deputy Inspector General of the Nigeria Police.

Each of the Councils established by this section may relegate its own procedure and, subject to its rules of procedure, may act notwithstanding any vacancy in its membership or the absence of any member.

**SectIon Nine**:

Deals with powers of the National Military Government, the Supreme Military Council, the Executive Council and Military Governor to delegate functions conferred on them by law.

**Section Ten:**

Deals with power to execute certain instruments in furtherance of power conferred on the Head of National Military Government or the Supreme Military Council or the Military Governor of a group of Provinces. Such power can be exercised as the case may be either by the Secretary to the National Military Government or the Permanent Secretary to the Department of the Government responsible for the matter or the Secretary to the Military Governor of the region concerned.

**Section Eleven**:

Deals with the establishment of an advisory Judicial Committee:

- There shall be an Advisory Judicial Committee which shall consist of:

(a) the Chief Justice of Nigeria, who shall be Chairman;
(b) the Chief Justices of Northern provinces, Eastern provinces, Western provinces, and the Mid-West and the Chief Justice of Lagos:
(c) the Grand Khadi ofthe Sharia Court of Appeal: and
(d) The Attorney General of the Republic.

- The Solicitor General of the republic shall act as SecreTary ofthe Advisory Judicial Committee.
- The Advisory Judicial Committee may, with the consent of the Head of the National Military Government, by regulation or otherwise, regulate its own procedure and, subject to its rules of procedure, may function notwithstanding any vacancy in its membership or the absence of any member.

**Section Twelve:**

Deals with modification of laws.

**Section Thirteen:**

Deals with safeguarding of existing offices and appointments.

**Section Fourteen**:

Deals with succession to property, contract, other arrangement, promissory notes, stocks, bonds and debentures.

**Section Sixteen:** Deals with the meaning of certain expressions m decrees and laws: "Decree" means an instrument made by the National Military Government and expressed to be, or to be made as a decree.

"Edict", meaning an instrument made by the Military Governor of a Group of Provinces and expressed to be, or to be made as an edict. "The Head of the National Military Government" means the Head of the National Military Government, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Nigeria.

**Section Seventeen**: Deals with the citation, extent, commencement power to delegate and meaning of functions:

- This decree may be cited as the Constitution (suspension and modification) Decree 1966 and shall apply throughout the Republic.
- This decree shall be deemed to have come into force on January 17, 1960.
- Where a power to delegate a function is conferred by this Decree, that power includes:

(a) Power to delegate the function to a limited extent only; and
(b) Power to delegate the function to different persons or authorities for different purposes, or in respect of different matter or different parts of Nigeria.

- In this decree, "functions" include power and duties.
- For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that any power to make laws conferred by this Decree includes power to make laws having extra- territorial operation.

Meanwhile, all the Military Governors were as the case with the Federal Government, to inherit the powers of the Regional Houses of Assembly, the powers and functions of the Houses of Chiefs, powers of Regional Executive Councils as well as powers of Regional Governors and Regional Premiers. Thus, when the regional Military Governors

convened, the Supreme Military Council was chaired by the Supreme Commander. You could not 65 The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War Usman Faruk imagine the most awesome power placed in the hands of one region, whose tribe wrongly believed that they were cheated in the past on almost any matter under the sun, by their compatriots. For instance, the detention of the five Igbo Officers who executed the first coup, was a condition recommended by Northern Leaders of Thought for tolerating the one sided coup. This began to be compromised as rumours started coming from the grapevine that the coup makers were being regarded as national heroes by the Igbo, now on the ascendancy. Few months later, it became obvious that the five detained coup plotters were in fact treated as heroes by both the Igbo group and the entire southern elite. Their salaries and allowances were being paid, and they were treated as lords in their detention camp. Now, instead of continuing with dialogue and taking practical steps to appease the genuinely aggrieved North by putting the five coup leaders, their co- plotters and executors to court marshal as required by the military code of conduct, the new government of Ironsi continued to court new enemies.

iii. **The Non Punishment of the Infamous Five Igbo Majors (The Coupists**)

While the northern masses waited for action by the Supreme Commander against the Igbo officers who were responsible for the blood bath in the nation, rumours started flying that the coupists were kept in mansions and were given V.I.P. treatment for a job well done. This and other unacceptable situations enumerated above, gave rise to 66 The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War Usman Faruk spontaneous riots in all major cities and towns in the North in what is historically known as "Araba This was a situation where angered and bewildered Northerners rose enmasse for revenge

against Igbos living in the North. Thus, one of the several unpardonable mistakes made by Ironsi was the non conciliation and lack of expeditious action against those responsible for the misguided action of the January 15th 1966.

All reasonable people in Nigeria and outside, could only associate this criminal negligence on the part of the Igbo with typical *Igboism*, which does not see anything wrong with any action performed by their kins, especially when the action favoured their ethnic group.

iv. **Plan to Eliminate Local Councilors**

Typical of civil servants who would always go to any length to justify any recommendation they put forward to their political OGA, no matter how bad, the Think Tank this time suggested to Ironsi that the North's defiance was caused by some experienced Councilors in their Emirate Councils. They told him that they had conducted a research which revealed that there were only a few of such Councilors as Waziris, Madakis, Galadimas, etc. in each Emirate. That the best course of action was to eliminate such class of local elites, whereby the people of the North would become a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Having thus removed the last "Ogas" of the North, as the only source of trouble, the Government would then proceed to bring down their Emirs and Chiefs to a relegated obtained in Niger Republic, i.e. as local advisers only on cultural matters to the Provincial and Divisional Even then, members of the Think-Tank went further to suggest converting the palaces into maternity homes for the masses, since the Prefects to be appointed would serve in areas they were not indigenous to. General Ironsi finally accepted this and set the ball rolling towards the actualization of the policy. However, not known to Ironsi the North got wind of this horrible plan and it was averted by the counter coup of 29th July at Ibadan. I was there as a Senior Detective

on special assignment. In fact, I vacated my rest house in Ibadan for an Emir to be accommodated hours before the "operation change of guards" started.

**V. The Igbo Coup was premeditated**

There shouldn't be any doubt that the January 15h 1966 coup was an Igbo coup, an Igbo agenda to actualize their selfish objective of dominating the entire country According to Ademoyega in his book **WHY WE STRUCK**

*"In 1965 in Nigeria, there was only one Major General (J.T. Aguiyi Ironsi), three Brigadiers (Ademulegun, Maimalari and Ogundipe), plus three Colonels (Adebayo, Kur Muhammed and Shodeinde). There were a larger Number of Lieutenant-Colonels, Majors and Captains who were moving up in the ranks. Ademoyega states that "the real planning for the coup d'etat began in about 1961, although it is more likely to have been during the 1963-64 period"*.

According to Ben Gbulie in his own book:

*"Those involved in plotting the overthrow of the Nigerian Government included eight Majors (Nzeogwu, Anuforo, Ifeajuna, nlom Ademoyega, Chukwuka, Okafor, Onwuatuegwe and Obienu) five Captains (Nwobosi, Oji, Ude, Adeleke & Gbulie), Four Lieutenants (Ezedigbo, Okura, Oyewole and Ogunchi) and seven second Lieutenants (lgweze, Ikejiofor; Olafemihon, Azubuogo, Nweke, Amre Chienwa and Wokechia). In October 1965, nine key officers met in Tarquah Bay to fashion a blue-print for the operation. Gbulie describes the nine as follows: Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu (a practicing catholic about thirty years old);*

*Major Chris Anuforo (thirty-five years old); Major Wole Ademoyega (a Yoruba intellectual, thirty-one years old); Major Humphrey Chukwuka (from Nnobi in the Eastern Region, thirty years old); Major Don Okafor (native of Omuokpu-Awka in the Eastern region, thrity-five years old); Major Tim Onwuatuegwu (hailed from Nnewi in the MIвю East, twenty-nine years old); Major John 69 The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War Usman Fard Obienu (from Oba, also in the East, twenty eight years old); Captain Emma Nwora Nwobosi (from Obosiin the East, twenty-eight years old).”*

In short, the average age of the plotters is thirty-one, and most were from the Eastern region. Gbulie goes on to give his perspectives on, the intended targets of the coup, including Sir Ahmadu Bello. The characteristics he attributes to Sardauna are:

*“Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, as Premier of the Northern region and Sardauna of Sokoto, wielded monumental power, he was the leader of the NPC, Chairman of the NNA, and foremost Northern politician and chief architect of not only the Northernization policy, but also the much feared Jihad. An arch-tribalist and therefore, an implacable enemy of Nigerian Unity, he was seen to be directing the affairs of the Federation from Kaduna, his methods decidedly Machiavellian. He was such a fanatic of a Muslim that he had even maintained that the State oflsrael did not exist.”*

Further proof that and it was an Igbo pre-meditated coup ethnic be agenda perpetrated to decimate the North can found in Alexander Madiebo's book, **The Nigerial Revolution and the Biafran War:**

***“****Major Christian Anuforo, the StaffOfficer in Army Headquarters responsible for arranging accommodation for these Officers, attempted to oust me from the mess VIP chalet I was staying in order to put Brigadier Ademulegun who was being expected from Ghana. When the Brigadier came in, he chose to stay in private accommodation. Judging*

*from subsequent events, it would appear Anuforo was merely trying to put the Brigadier where he could be easily held.... while in Lagos, a few officers through their conversations with me, gave clear indications that they were, as individuals dissatisfied to the extent of resorting to violence if need be, to rectify their personal and national grievances. No one however made it known to me that a definite decision had taken by some of them to carry out a coup. Also Major Donatus Okafor; later buried alive for his involvement in the January 1966 coup, as the Commander of the Federal Guards, had the occasion to speak to me angrily over his problems with the Commander of 2nd Brigade, Brigadier Zakari Maimalari. Major Okafor said it was his immediate intentioN to deal with Maimalari befpre Maimalari succeeded in dismissing him 71 The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War Usman Faruk from the Army for punishing a Northern Soldier who went absent without leave. In another conversation, Major Anuforo condemned Colonel Yakubu Pam, the Adjutant-General and a Northerner from Jos for being brutal to livrioters ofNorthern Nigeria while commander of Third Battalion. Talking of Pam, Anuforo commented that an Officer who had caused the death of so many people should be punished. The comments and opinions of these Officers meant very little to me then, but became very significant when those same officers turned out to be the leaders of the January 1966 coup. Alhaji Yusufu, the Commissioner of Police for Northern Nigeria, also showed open resentment over the conduct of the revolution and in fact, refused to go and see Nzeogwu when he sent for him. But for my timely intervention he could have lost his life, for Soldiers had been detailed to go and gun him down."*

After reading the surmises and innuendoes of most of the Igbo and other writers on the civil war, I became more convinced that really, it ought to be decreed that histories should be written not only by the opposing sides, but also by balanced people. The reason for this conclusion is the quality of shameless lies and provocative fabrications written by those writers especially the Igbo ones, who have almost

tirelessly continued to embarrass the Nigerian people to nauseating proportions.

The average Northerner I must repeat, has always been one of concise emotions with an unsurpassable belief in the will of ALLAH. Everything that happens, he takes it to be an act of God. He is not the type that throws tantrums or cry over spilled milk. But to colour the significance of the events of January 15th 1966 in distorted images, calls for reaction.

The coup was an expression of monumental frustrations and envy; envy of the land, the people, and their leaders. The North had been hated and envied because of its rich cultural heritage and disposition. The large expanse of agricultural lands yielding not only food crops and tubers but grazing animals of different types; the fauna and flora became the envy of all. But all that was GOD- given and nobody can ever take it away from them. It is not my style to join issues with writers, but when I read on page 27 of Alexander Madiebo's book, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* that:

*"The January coup was widely acclaimed all over the country including the Northern region, where top civil servants celebrated its success, and apparently happy ending by holding parties both in their homes and public places!"*

I began to worry about the effect of such blatant inaccuracies on the young, up and coming people of Nigeria. But, it was Madiebo himself, that contradicted those dangerous lies, as he wrote in the same book on page 29:

*"The plot to overthrow General Ironsi's Government was slow, deliberate and systematic. Said to have been conceived in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, it was worked out in detail by Northern Nigerian*

*Civil Servants and politicians and executed by the entire Northern Civilians and their Military counterparts"*

I have said somewhere in this book that the Sardauna was the overall Leader of Northern Nigeria, a sage with a mission, loved by most in the North. Even opposition leaders disagreed with him only on party programme but not on anything personal. They regarded him as their father and an acknowledged visionary who had the interest of the North and all Northerners at heart.

The leader of that coup, Major C.K. Nzeogwu, knew the enormous resources of inTellect possessed by the Sardauna. He studied and found out that the Sardauna possessed mind of great proportions. He knew after the Northernization Policy, the man was capable of producing another ace to keep him in power for as long as he wanted. The lgbos had to take power to sustain their "I before others" mentality. They had controlled the Railways, the P and T and the overall civil service. But the Sardauna dispossessed them of these. They had to take power to satisfy their greed and blood thirstiness. This showed that after all, they were not as brainy as they would have us believe, for the brainy types would have taken power without bloodletting. The Sardauna did it neatly. The killings also showed the lack of tact and immaturity of the coupists.

Apologists of the coupists have tried, ineffectually though, to show that the real intention was to liberate the whole country, the East inclusive. Now why didn't they strike simultaneously in the North, East, West and Lagos? **Why should the plans fail conveniently in the East?** If it was a nation-wide revolution, why were northern officers not enlisted in the original plans? Why not organize fresh elections? Or was it the fear that even without the Sardauna and Tafawa Balewa, the Northern political class had the capacity for quick coalescence?

Other writers on the same event, so unabashedly insinuated that the young Igbo chaps who murdered the Northern Premier and his compatriots did SO to hand over power to Awolowo. Nothing could be further from the truth. Both the Yorubas and the Igbos wanted power very badly and would go to any length to secure it. Both of them are also very proud.

True, both have united against the North on a number of occasions, but all those times, the primordial driving spirit had been selfish motives. Each, with subterranean subtlety, waited for the Northerner who always had the advantage of cool headedness and foresight. Both felt the other would be easier dealt with when it came to a duel between the two.So to suggest that those young Igbo officers, dared all foreseeable but nonetheless unexpected consequences to seize power through the barrel of the gun, after murdering some of the most important people of Nigeria, and then hand over that same power on a platter of gold to Awolowo. is a ridiculous surmise bereft of logic. In fact, it would have been easier for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle, than for an Igbo to handover power to a Yoruba man.

Really, immediate post war information had it that senior Igbo officers like General Ironsi and Col. Ojukwu, had a pretty good idea and privileged top secret information that the Majors would strike. This was what the former President Alhaji Shehu Shagari said on whether or not Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was aware of the Igbo majors plan to stage a coup on 15h January 1966. The whole issue was a typical tactical precaution, which gave that the dirty job was to be done by the hot-headed ones and if they failed, the seniors in high places would protect them. But if they were to succeed, then the most senior would step forward take over power and thank them privately for a job well done. There was no doubt that if General Aguiyi Ironsi had been mistakenly

shot during the execution of the first coup, as happened to others in the subsequent coup, then the leadership of Nigeria would have certainly descended on Col. Ojukwu himself, but certainly not Col. Bassey from the South Eastern State, or Col. Kurubo from Rivers state. It is important to remember that Brig. Ogundipe, the Chief of General Staff and Col. Adeyinka Adebayo, never did exist in the book of all Igbo Officers from the rank of Sub- lieutenant to General Ironsi in the Armed Forces of 1966.

**The Cacophony of Lies and Deceit**

On the morning of 16th January 1966, one of the Igbo conspirators, in the person of the acting President of the federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Nwafor Orizu, made the following broadcast:

*"I have, tonight, been advised by the Council of Ministers that they had come to the unanimous decision to voluntarily hand over administration of the country to the Armed Forces of the Republic with immediate effect. All ministers are assured of their personal safety by the new administration. I will now call upon the General Officer Commanding, Nigerian Army, Major General Aguyi Ironsi, to make a statement to the nation on the policy ofthe administration.*

*It is my fervent hope that the new administration will ensure the peace and stability of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and that all citizens will give them their full cooperation*.

**The Acceptance**

The General Officer Commanding the Nigerian Army, Major General Johnson Thomas Umunakwe Aguyi Ironsi spoke to the Nation in these words:

*"The Military Government ofNigeria wishes to state that it has taken over the interim administration of the Republic of Nigeria following the invitation of Council of Ministers ofthe last Government for the Army to do so.*

*For some time now, there have been escalating political disturbances in parts of Nigeria with increasing loss of faith between political parties, and between political leaders themselves. This crisis of confidence reached a head during the elections in the Western region in October last year. There were charges by the opposition parties of rigging of the elections and general abuse of power by the regional government in the conduct ofthe elections. Riots, arson, murder; and looting became widespread in Western Nigeria since October. The situation deteriorated and certain Army Officers attempted to seize power*."

*In the early hours of the morning of January 15h 1966, these officers kidnapped the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, and took them to an unknown destination. The revolt was widespread throughout the country and two regional Premiers and some high-ranking Army officers were killed. The where about of the Prime Minister is still unknown. The vast majority of the Nigerian Army under the command of General Officer Commanding the Nigerian Army remained completely loyal to the National Government and immediately took steps to control the situation.*

*The Council of Ministers of the National Government met and appraised the problems confronting the government. They appreciated the immediate need to control the serious situation, which threatened the Republic. They also saw quite clearly a possible deterioration of the situation in the light of developments on Saturday, January 15 1966. On Sunday January 16h the Council of Ministers unanimously decided to hand over voluntarily, the administration of the country with immediate effect to the Nigerian Army. This was formally done the same day by the Acting President of the Republic. The Government of*

*the Republic of Nigeria having ceased to function, the Nigeria Armed Forces have been invited to form an Interim Military Government for the purpose of maintaining law and order; and of maintaining essential services.*

*This invitation has been accepted and I, GENERAL JOHNSON THOMAS UMUNAKWE AGUIYI-IRONSI, the General Officer Commanding the Nigeria Army, have been formally invested with the authority as Head of the National Military Government and Supreme Commander of the Nigerian Armed Forces"*

He announced decrees for the suspension of the Offices of the President, the Prime Minister and the Parliament. He also decreed that there should be a Military Government in each region of the Federation, and that the Regional Military Government should be responsible to the Federal Military Government. By this decree, the provisions for the offices of the Regional Governor, Premiers, and Executive Council were suspended.

He further decreed that the Chief Justice and all other Judges would continue to hold offices and the judiciary would continue to function normally under the present status. All civil servants, the Nigeria Police Force and the Special Constabulary Force would continue to function as at present. But all Local Government and Native Authority Police would be under the control of the Inspector General of Police.

He announced that the Military Government was determined to suppress the disorders in Western Nigeria and the Tiv Division of Northern Nigeria.

It is our intention", he declared, "to maintain law and order until such a time when a Constitution is brought out according to the wishes of the People. He promised that the new administration would honour all agreements.

He would also maintain present external relations. He called on all citizens to cooperate in "*this urgent task to maintain law and order in the country*". On January 17th, the Major General outlined his policy. He said that:

(a) The functions of the Federal Military Government would be exercised by the Supreme Military Council, the details of which would be announced later.
(b) The Permanent Secretaries in charge of federal Ministries would continue in their office carrying out the normal functions of Government and they should be directly responsible to the Federal Military Government when consulted.
(c) In the regions, there would be Military Governments under military Governors, assisted by advisers who were the last persons to hold the offices of regional Governors. The normal functions of government in each Region would be carried out by the Permanent Secretaries in the government there.
(d) The Regional Military Governments were directly responsible to the Head of Federal Military Government and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
(e) Public Corporations and other statutory bodies such as Local Governments would continue to function under their appropriate ministries.
(f) All existing laws, regulations, orders and official instructions remained in force, wherever applicable until either modified or abrogated by the Federal Military Government.

**The Truth of the Matter**

In the cause of my investigation, I had the opportunity to interview two prominent personalities and elders who I fact served as ministers under the late prime minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. These gentlemen were Alhai Maitama Sule and Alhaji Inuwa Wada, both

ministers to the late prime minister. The following story is the summary of my interviews with them.

Some time before mid night of the 15th January, the British High Commissioner personally drove to Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's residence with the intention of taking him to safety following intelligence reports that some blood thirsty soldiers in the Nigerian Army would strike to terminate the Federal Government and the lives of some important Nigerians in Government. But the Prime Minister did not of get to hear the purpose such a visit at mid night and SO did not see the High Commissioner who then returned He to his own quarters. planned to repeat the visit in the morning before the zero hour. That however was bent not to be because the criminals on implementing their murderous mission Prime Minister's home and abducted him.

Elsewhere, at about 2:00 am of the 15th January, Yusuf Maitama Sule, Minister in the cabinet of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, received a telephone call from the wife of the second ADC to the Prime Minister, telling him that the Prime Minister's house had been surrounded by armed soldiers- an unusual scene at the residence of a perfect gentleman and head of Government. To Maitama Sule, this was very unusual indeed. What was the matter? To find out, he quickly dressed up in loose apparel, took his son's bicycle and pedaled down to the Prime Minister's house. The loose dressing and the bicycle served as camouflages. At the gate to the PM's house, the Soldiers were indeed there and they actually shouted at him чтобы go back, thinking him to be a wayward night marauder. He left the place not. back to his own house, but to the house of Alhaji Ibrahim Tako Galadima who was acting Defence Minister since the substantive minister Alhaji Inuwa Wada was away in Zurich on medical treatment.

In the house, he was told he could not see the Minister as he was asleep having returned late the previous evening. But Maitama had to

see him and enlisted the assistance of one of the Guard Servants to gain entrance. Then, he told his sleepy colleague what he saw in the Prime Minister's house- fierce looking soldiers strewn at strategic places enroute.

To Ibrahim Tako Galadima too, this was very disturbing news indeed. He too dressed up quickly, joined his colleague and drove to the Obalende Army Barracks for more information and explanation. There, the Soldiers on guard duty told them that their GOC-General Aguyi Ironsi had already been there and had instructed them to be completely loyal and take orders about anything they might hear, from him alone and Brigadier Maimalari. B*ut by The Time General Ironsi Was Giving Those Orders, Brigadier Maimalari Had Already Been Killed and His Body and That of Lt. Col. Abogo Largema Were in Major Okafor's Car Boot*. This means that by giving those orders, General Ironsi was the only one to be obeyed since he knew that Brigadier Maimalari had already been murdered. Ironsi only mentioned Maimalari's name to deceive Northem troops of the command and give them a false sense of security.

From Obalende, the two Northern Ministers then drove to the residence of Zanna Bukar Dipcharima, now most Senior Northern Minister since Alhaji Inuwa Wada, Defence Minister and most senior, was в Zurich with his Permanent Secretary Alhaji Sule Kolo. Even there, the Northern Ministers contacted him but he said something to the effect that he should be left out of the problems in the country since he was not в the country.

It was at Dipcharima's place that other Ministers joined them to analyze the security situation in the country. It was there still that they all heard through Radio Kaduna (BCNN) that the Sardauna, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Premier of the Northern region, and Chief S.L. Akintola, Premier

of the Western Region, had been murdered and that Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu had taken over power in the Norther region. At this juncture, the Northern Ministers broke up to go and prepare for the next to course of action. Before going their respective homes however, both Maitama Sule and Ibrahim Tako decided to go to Dr. Kingsley Mbadiwe- Minister in the same government who, as a colleague in the same democratic enterprise, they thought would sympathize with their plight even ifhe was an Igbo himself. They wanted to give him a graphic detail of what they saw в the Prime Minister's house and the news from Radio Kaduna. But they met him at that odd hour discussing crucial security matters with the Igbo Union Leader. The time was 3 a.m. of the 15h January. K.O. Mbadiwe's response was appalling. First, the man showed no surprise at their revelations, suggesting that he was very much в the picture. Secondly, he boldly and shamelessly suggested to them to rally round and appoint him acting Prime Minister with the promise that he would negotiate mitigation with the murderous soldiers. The shock was too much for Maitama Sule and Ibrahim Tako, sO they just left. They had expected sympathy from him as a hitherto loyal and reliable Minister в the Tafawa Balewa Government.

Later, when the embattled northern Ministers reassembled, they were advised by the British Commissioner of Police, Mr. David Luckier, to appoint among themselves an acting Prime Minister and there after he (Mr. Luckier) would request the British Government to provide them with troops to frustrate the coup and prop up the new Government в Nigeria. Somewhere else, the GOC General Ironsi after wide consultations with his Igbo kinsmen в the Government and the army, instructed the country's acting President Dr. Nwafor Orizu, not to appoint any body as acting Prime Minister. The country's President Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, was away в London for medical reasons. As a matter of fact, when Dr. Azikiwe was seen off at the Airport by the Prime

Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a lady domestic staff of the President, phoned Maitama Sule, who was also there to see off the president telling him that there was nothing particularly wrong with the President to warrant his being flown out. She believed the trip was to provide him the alibi when the murderous mission was to be perpetrated. The lady was proved right not long after.

As I said, the GOC, General Ironsi was on his feet trying to scuttle any efforts to install anybody to further the democratic government. So he decided to:

1. Frustrate the Northern Ministers' drive for some one among them becoming the Ag. Prime Minister. This he did by getting Dr. Nwafor Orizu to tell the Northerners that he had no power to appoint anybody, since he was only there в an acting capacity. That the only way to appoint an acting Prime Minister was for the council of ministers to fly to London and present their choice to the President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, to eventually swear him in. Ofcourse, the northern ministers read the message right. It was a gimmick to buy time for the Igbo grand agenda since ran that procedure contrary to the provisions of the constitution ofthe country.
2. Mandate the Attorney General to prepare the Drtt for the taking over of Government. He followed this up with a subtle threat to the northern Ministers when he met them в Zanna Bukar Dipcharima's house where he told them to authorize him to take over the Government as the GOC of the country or the rebelling soldiers would carry out their threat of blocking off the Jebba and Makurdi bridges and isolate the entire North. He also hinted that the rampaging soldiers intended to use the exercise to commit more mayhem.

Meanwhile, the Northerners в their frenzy had been making their own consultations and it was one of them, a senior official of the Defence

Ministry that intercepted an important message from Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu в a telephone conversation with the G.O.C, urging him to take over power в the country immediately. The G.O.C., moved fast by ordering a Council of Ministers meeting. The presence of armed soldiers emphasized the tension of the moment and the subtle threat to anybody who dared contradict whatever the G.O.C was going to say. So, General Ironsi told them that in their own interest, he was going to take over the affairs of the country as the Military Head of State, emphasizing that, that was the only way to prevent further blood letting and destruction. He left no one в doubt as to what would happen should he be prevented from becoming Head of State. The Ministers too were в no doubt of what could happen to them should they insist on the furtherance of the toppled democratic Government. *They Might Not Leave The Council Alive* what with the murderous Majors left loose. So, the Ministers в attendance accepted General Ironsi's proposal and under duress, signed an already prepared draft. It was this ready. made document that was later tagged the Council of Ministers' invitation to the GOC to take over the Government of Nigeria. *But Posterity Must Know That Those Consciencious People Signed The So-Called Invitation Under Duress And For Fear Of Their Lives*. The facts just stated were obtained in a personal interview with Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule

**I. The Body of the Prime Minister**

It is pertinent to recall here that of all the ministers present at the meeting, it was only Maitama Sule who dared to ask the question as to the whereabouts of the Prime Minister. He wanted to know if he was still alive, or if he was dead and whether they could have the body for a proper burial according to Islamic Injunctions in his home в Bauchi. The body of the Prime Minister was discovered where it was dumped by Major Okafor and Major Ifeajuna who committed the murders on

the Lagos-Abeokuta road by a certain ASP Ibrahim Ahmed Baban Kowa. As a matter of fact, three other bodies were found together with the body of the Prime Minister. The bodies of Chief Festus Okoti Eboh, Col. Kur Muhammad and Lt. Col. Abogo Largema. Two Planes were made available for the conveyance of the bodies and the escorts which included Alhaji Yusuf Maitama the Sule, Alhaji Kam Selem Inspector General of Police, Alhaji Hamman Maiduguri an AIG and Alhaji Kaftan the deceased's ADC. This vital information was supplied by ASP Ibrahim Babankowa [retired AIG] who, in fact accompanied the body to Bauchi for burial.

Before the body was moved, we в the CID (X-Squad), forerunners of the present SSS, had been directed to go and help recover the body. The body was mutilated, evidence that the Prime Minister had been tortured by his captors before he was finally killed. He must have been seriously tortured to show the depth of the hatred from the perpetrators of the coup. His recorded voice revealed the depth of torture meted out on the most honourable gentleman. Incredibly, a dramatized version of the late Prime Minister's travails was recorded on tape and circulated for the sadistic enjoyment of certain people. It was at first not easy to see the psychology of that tape being circulated by the Igbo group, but later, it was understood as the murderers' way of showing their gallantry. Negative as it was in their warped minds, it was gallantry.

Somewhere in Gombe, not far from my house, the tape was played to the enjoyment of people of like warped minds in a hotel. But to the right thinking people who heard it, the dramatized shaky voice of the Prime Minister, terrorized and terrified, was too much for emotional control. Tension flared up and the people lost control в the face of that sadistic and callous display of immorality and bestiality. The people lost control not just because he was the prime minister, but because of the bestiality of the offence. That hotel was reduced to ashes and the owners just managed to escape. Just out of envy and monumental

contempt for what is good, they took the life of a complete Gentleman and Chief Executive of the country and soldiers- armed and the unarmed. This was sadism and bestiality only fit for animals of the lowest order.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Counter Coup or Retaliation Ramagayya 29th July 1966

Personally, I had always thought that it did not need any leakage of the fact or clairvoyance, from any right thinking person to know that the North was going to counter strike. Anybody who knows the Northerner will know that their next course of action would be unpredictable. Therefore, surprising to many was the type of reaction from the North for the affront shown to it.

While General Ironsi and his advisers were anxiously awaiting the outcome of several action plans mischievously hatched to trap and catch the remaining second tier elites from the North, four schools of thought were equally very busy in finding final means of survival should the planned annihilation be let loose on them or on their fathers and brothers. These included a group of civil servants from Kaduna with their contacts in the Northern Provinces. The second group was drawn from northern elements in the armed forces, whose entire seniors were wiped out by the crude, cruel and callous actions of Nzeogwu and his group, without even consideration for religion or sympathy to the minority angle of some of the northern officers murdered. For instance, Lt. Col. Yakubu Pam, a Christian minority, was murdered simply because he was a northerner. Col. Shodeinde and Brigadier Ademulegun were Yorubas but murdered in bed, simply because they were adjudged by the January 15th coup

plotters as being friendly with northern leaders. This collective killing of all class of Northerners and their friends became a wake up call to all Notherners in any calling that their tribe or religious leanings notwithstanding they are the same hated and despised group in the country. The third group was made up of northern elements in Lagos, mainly, the top and intermediate civil servants. A fourth group of concerned Northerners was the northern elements in the Police Force resident in Lagos and a few from other areas outside Lagos. Those involved in this group were mainly drawn from intermediate cadre, because of the peculiar role of the police as the major security outfit of the Government. Consultation from these groups added up and pointed to one indisputable conclusion. That the remaining second tier leadership of the North, made up of N. A. Councilors and Emirs, were to be eliminated under the pretext that they incited riots and disturbances in various parts of the North. Therefore, they must be liquidated and disseminated in a modified version of Hitler's gas chambers. That is, they would be rounded up quietly at midnight and made to disappear into the thin air. When this feat was achieved, then the next target would be the restless second crop of northern Military Officers from the rank of captain and above. This would be followed by the elimination of members of northern origin in the Police and other civil servants, especially those who have been identified as intelligent, radical or strong headed and were therefore unlikely to agree to be stooges or slaves to the proposed Igbo oligarchy.

ALHAJI USMAN FARUK – Detective Police Officer 1964-1967

Perhaps the busiest year was 1966 during the First Igbo Coup that killed the Prime Minister, Premiers of the North and the West, the Country's Finance Minister then and the cream of the Northern Military. He was also on duty as one of the CID Officers to probe the activities of the murdered Sardauna and others.

I was a member of the inner circle which coordinated some action. In my position as a member of the panel to probe Tafawa Balewa's cabinet, the Sardauna, and their friends in the Western region and Lagos, I contributed my widow's mite in planning and linking so many ideas leading to our D. Day of 29th July. I was able to do a lot because my assignment and nature of my office as a member of the X. squad, later known as the Special Inquiry Bureau, had license to operate in all four regions. In those days, our terms of reference were only confined to very big crimes or political crimes of very high

nature. We did not bother ourselves with normal crimes, including murders. Those were left to uniformed policemen or other CID members to handle. In fact, we were made to reside in the Aje gunle area, amidst hardened criminals, some of who became our friends and helped us investigate our kind of crimes, whilst we usually turned our eyes away from theirs. While I crisscrossed the country incognito, I was able to piece together what was afoot from both camps of the Northerners and of the Igbos. In the civilian sector of the northern elements, it was the versatile Alhaji Abubakar Alhaji, then either Senior or Principal Secretary, who ran the show for all civil servants. Alhaji Abubakar, left no stone unturned in his private and individual effort to get what he had to get and what action he had to take to enable the northern elements survive the second planned onslaught on the North by Ironsi's Think-Tank. In the course of those efforts, we met several times to exchange ideas and information. The major actors in the military front were Murtala Muhammad and T. Y. Danjuma who were Majors, and a few others in Lagos, Kaduna, and Ibadan. While these developments were taking place in Lagos, the Kaduna group was equally very active. Secret meetings and mutual consultations were conducted on various options which would lead to the actualization of the objective of the northern action group.

The May 1966 riots in the North were inevitable and could not have been stopped by the northern leadership. The riots were a spontaneous reaction by the northern people to a catalogue of painful and provocative actions by the South, especially the Igbo. Firstly, there were the jeers and the taunts on Northerners by the Southerners, especially the Igbos in the North. They teased their northern hosts by telling them to their face, that, "your father is

dead; we are now your new fathers". They openly showed immense happiness at the murder of the Premier, the Prime Minister and others. Secondly, to add insult to injury, the Igbos resident in the North, misconstruing the calmness and non-violent reaction from the North to mean fear and cowardice, started circulating insulting and highly provocative pictures of the late Sardaua in a Drum Magazine owned by their people. That was what fueled and ignited the northern riots or "Araba", which for all intents and purposes, underlined the true inherent Igbo callousness and their lack of inherent diplomatic approach to issues of high sensitivity.

The particular offensive picture showed in death, Sir Ahmadu Bello, transposed, floating in space, being interviewed and 'confessing' his sins of mixing politics with religion and playing the role of prophet cum ceasar. The June 1966 edition of the Drum Magazine, was widely distributed and greatly insulted the feelings of Northerners They were truly incensed and pushed to the end of their self restraint. While the Sardauna and the Prime Minister were alive, such diatribes were ignored because the Sardauna was of noble birth and would not go so low as to join issues with minions, while Sir Abubakar remained till the end, *the right honorable gentleman*.

While the plans of northern counter coup was being finalized there occurred rumours of a possible leak, but we refused to believe that any of the members of the four groups would go so low and so unpatriotic as to divulge the top secret plans of the North against the impending second Igbo attack on Northerners. Therefore, the post war story of Col. Madiebo, lost most of its steam, when he alleged that his informant was the cousin of the late Sardauna of Sokoto himself. I believe that he

introduced this lie merely to convince General Ironsi that the allegation was true, and therefore worthy of acceptance. In fact we believed that it was part of the ploy to accelerate the second Igbo coup in thee making

However, the information received by the northern elements immediately caused them to go back to the drawing board in order to re-examine their plans. While all these were happening, we suddenly received information that northern Emirs and Chiefs were invited for a meeting with the Supreme Commander at Ibadan scheduled for 29th - 30th July, 1966. With this development came very strong rumours that the subject of the meeting would be the much dreaded beginning of the second elimination of the second tier of northern elites. In fact, I was in one of the catering rest house chalets in Ibadan on the 28th July 1966. It was the room I vacated, which was allocated to one of the emirs. With this very fluid political and security situation, the northern elements had no alternative but to bring forward their counter plan in order to pre-empt the impending one by the Igbos which was not far away. The whole situation looked like the proverbial "camp of snakes". The first to strike was the most likely winner.

As part of the northern preparation, instructions were passed from man to man a few weeks earlier, advising all civil servants and Police personnel to send their families back to the North and the men to remain in their various places of work, come what may. In fact, the idea was that we all believed that nobody would survive the holocaust of the counter coup. Our resolution (our military and us) was either to die en masse or to succeed. No thought of power was in the mind of any one of us. No dream of acquiring ill-gotten goodies or war booties, or even office. The prime objective was to avenge the death

of our political leaders, our fathers and brothers in the army without any further thought of anything in the world. Now, more than ever, we seemed in unison to be recalling the famed address of the Sardaua on the Christmas Eve of 1959.

*Here in Northern Nigeria.....we have people of many different races, tribes and religions who are knit together by common history, common interest, and common ideals. Our diversity may be great, but the things that unite us are stronger than the things that divide us*.

Finally, as I have said earlier, the conciliation and lack of expeditious action against those responsible for the misguided coup of January 15, 1966 did not help matters, for it was this that finally led to the counter coup of July 29. The government underestimated the ability of the North, without the Sardaua, to mobilize itself against the might of the new military regime of the Supreme Commander. And I repeat, that their costly blunder was when they argued that even if the North could put up such a spontaneous show of defiance in the face of armed soldiers of Ironsi, they never believed the Christian North and their animist compatriots, who the Igbo elite thought should be celebrating for having been liberated by the five Igbo majors from the yoke of Hausa-Fulani domination through the death of Sardaua, could ever join the Muslim North. But how wrong could General Ironsi and his advisers be? They discovered to their utter dismay that the so-called Christian North was as Wequally committed to the North as their Muslim the counterparts. The intellectual argument that the Christians would gladly break away from their centuries- old brothers from Kano, Zaria, and Borno in favour of joining the Christian Igbo from the

East and others from the West was mere wishful thinking.

Here, Ironsi himself and of course his advisers seriously erred. Out of gross ignorance, it never occurred to their shallow academics, that less than forty years before the Fulani Jihad, the majority of the Muslim North was basically from the original 'pagan stock' with the Christian stock of today and have remained so, for more than three hundred years before the advent of Islam from the East.

Even today in such states as Kaduna, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Niger and Kwara, there is no single community without some connection of the two religions, with Muslims and practicing Christians. All of them, and as far north as Kano, old Gobir, Zamfara and Kebbi Empires, were of Habe stock converted to Islam by Eastern influence. This left a large proportion of the pagan stock that subsequently opted for Christianity, while yet others, in their millions still stick to the old pagan practices. We Northerners sincerely advise our Eastern and Western compatriots to go back to school and to their drawing boards, if they really want to study the Northerner and his characteristics. His simplicity is always a decoy for better things to be discovered. For instance, the South generally, is yet to discover why the British colonial power had so much confidence in the so-called uneducated North to the extent that they could trust their region and employ the indirect rule system even from the early days of colonialism. This is instead of having a slave master relationship, as in the case of the entire South, which came under a system known as direct rule. In fact, years later, the North's abilities led the British to hand over power to a

northern leadership after the historic Nigerian independence in October 1960.

For these reasons, I personally consider that the coup on principle. Nobody believed he would survive. No greed of any description. Therefore, the story credited to Professor Biobaku in his book that, after the successful northern coup, the officers sent their families home in preparation to break the North from the South was not true. People who did not know the cause of the earlier movements, saw the latest movement of families as being a plan by the Northerners to take the North out of the Federation. How on earth could we accomplish only the first phase of our several objectives and then throw away our God given victory? No Northerner had ever dreamt of abandoning one inch of the land forming the Federation of Nigeria, even in the face of defeat, let alone in the warm embrace of victory. How on earth could any sensible man throw away a piece of territory of Nigeria when we own more than two thirds of the entire land which our fore fathers conquered centuries ago?

Another aspect of the coup, was that unlike other coups before and after it, it was bravely carried out in broad daylight. The northern soldiers were not cowards that would go in the middle of the night murdering people and their innocent families in bed. Unlike the igbos in uniform who prided themselves in shooting innocent and unarmed women, as Major Nzeogwu and his colleagues had shamelessly and cowardly done. the northern soldiers confronted their enemies as armed men in uniform and their innocent families in bed. Unlike the Igbos in uniform, eyeball-to-eyeball.

# Mission Accomplished 29th July 1966

When the calculations were done and concluded, the order to carry out the "Operation Survival" was issued and essful by the morning of 29" July 1966, General Ironsi and his host the Military Governor of Western Region, Col. Fajuyi were no more. While Major Murtala Muhammad (later General) coordinated the operation from Ikeja cantonment, Major T. Y. Danjuma (Later Lt. General) and his team carried out the Ibadan operation. Immediately the operation was successfully completed, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon was requested to take over as the new Supreme Commander, being the most senior Northern Military Officer. Until that time, he was Chief of Army Staff in the Defence Headquarters, with late Brig. Ogundipe as the Chief of General Staff. Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, was sworn in as the new Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

**Col. (General) Yakubu Gowon** – Took over mantle of leadership after the Northern counter coup of July 1966. And prosecuted the Civil War to a victorious conclusion.

**Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello** – Sardoua of Sokoto – Premier of Northern Nigeria. His death and others sparked a series of problems which culminated into the Civil War.

**Chief Obafemi Awolowo** – was the first Premier of the Western Region. He was in prison when Gowon after taking over released him and others.

Men of Destiny
These Men Played Keyroles in the History of Nigeria
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Admiral Akinwale Wey became Nigeria's 2nd In Command as the Deputy to General Gowon in the Supreme Military Council.
Col. Later General Hassan Usman Katsina became the North's first and Only Military Governor after Sardauna's assassination in January 1966.
Brig. J U Bassey was from the Eastern Region. But because he was not light, was not considered fit for leadership position by the January 1966 Coup Makers despite the fact that he was a full Colonel and acting Brigadier.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Reaction of Col. Ojukwu to Yakubu Gowon's Ascension to Power 1st August 1966

By 9:00am on 29th July 1966, when the news of the successful northern coup filtered through to Enugu and of course to Col. Ojukwu, one could only imagine the horrendous state of his mind. Stories of his first reactions to the unpalatable news had by now been told by so many of his compatriots who were privileged to be close to him. As a typical egotist, who believed that only members of his ethnic group were capable of making any intelligent plans, be they administrative or military, Ojukwu outrightly refused in his mind, to entertain the possibility that the remnants of northern officer corps like Majors and Captains (left overs from the January 15th coup) could be in a position to carry out a military feat of such magnitude, that would eliminate the Igbo supreme commander. How could the tattered, half-educated Northerners, be credited with an act so colossal as to be able to topple the Federal Government headed by an Igbo General? The more the idea failed to stick in the thick skull of the Nnewi born actor and dramatist, the more hard information kept on pouring in, to confirm the unbelievable. Ojukwu's worry was not only for himself as a paper soldier, but the difficulty he would encounter in convincing his people, that it was really the Northerners and not foreign mercenaries that did it on behalf of the Northerners.

The northern people, who had been demoted, reduced and portrayed by Ojukwu's propaganda, as only a collection of sheep without a shepherd, could then be said to have the brains and guts to reverse what he could imagine as the course of history.

By mid-day of 29th July, Ojukwu could not pretend to act anymore in the face of the BBC, Voice of America and other international media reports giving almost factual accounts of what actually happened, what was happening and then of course, what would probably happen within the next 24 hours. All these, to the hearing of a shocked Igbo population. The message came to them loud and clear that both General Ironsi and his host Col. Fajuyi were kidnapped and killed by northern troops. Furthermore, already Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, who returned to Nigeria from a military course in the United Kingdom a few hours before the January 15th, 1966, coup, had taken over as the new Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. By the evening of the day, hundreds of serving Igbo soldiers and their families were pouring into Enugu, the Eastern capital in all shapes as they escaped the northern anger. They came in with tons of lies and rumours as to what was happening in Lagos, Ibadan and the North. An Igbo man, who had no kobo in the North for the past twenty years, would move into Enugu with his forehead or leg tied, in blood-soaked bandage, crying and wailing that all his money and property worth millions of pounds were confiscated by wild Northerners. Even Igbos who lived their lives in the West or Lagos, concocted similar or worse stories on reaching the East in their flashy vehicles. First, they would hide the vehicles and report to Ojukwu semi nude, in order to attract a promised compensation for things purported to have been lost. That is "Igboism" in the real sense of the word. Just compare and contrast this with an exactly similar situation when Northerners living in the

East, West, and Lagos woke up on January, 15th 1966 and found that they had lost all their political leaders as well as their senior military officers. Not a single Northerner living in any part of Nigeria, lost his level headedness. I am a living witness in Lagos where all of us even reported to our offices as usual and chatted with our Yoruba and Igbo colleagues. We remained calm and normal up to the D-Day of 29th July, 1966. That is a Northerner in the true sense of the word. He is more mature, more accommodating, more resilient and more courageous than all the others. Telling lies and acting dishonorably in order to attract benefit is always not in our character. Our belief in God is so strong and so unique that an average Northerner, be he a Muslim or a Christian never believes that heaven and the earth would meet over a major catastrophe.

## The Rumbling of the Wounded Lion of Biafra

Having overcome the initial shock of the new situation, one would have thought that Ojukwu and his ilk, would have summoned courage in seeing the handwriting on the wall and seek amicable solution to the daunting problems facing him. But as was expected from a leader with a warped mind, whose inordinate ambition and craze for power at any cost, blinded him from putting the interest of his people above his own, Col. Ojukwu immediately denounced and vehemently rejected any idea of cooperation between him and Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, the new Head of State of Nigeria. To justify this defiance, he set out a number of demands or conditions which must be fulfilled before any peaceful settlement could be attained In summary, the conditions put up were such that he could not discuss anything with Lagos until he knew the whereabouts of the former Head of State,

General Aguyi Ironsi, whom he insisted was still alive. If Lagos confirmed that he was dead, then he must see or receive the body. While he was pushing these futile arguments, he deliberately chose to forget that, when on the 15th of January 1966, Nigerians were awakened to the shocking news of the assassination of our beloved and God fearing first Prime Minister, the toast of all the people of Nigeria, Ojukwu did not raise any objection to the appointment of his fellow Igbo man as Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. Neither did he decline accepting the appointment of the first Military Governor of the then Eastern region of Nigeria by the same Head of State on 16 January 1966. He did not raise any objection nor did he insist that all those ceremonies must wait until the body of late Tafawa Balewa had been recovered and handed over to the Bauchi people.

Another objection raised by Ojukwu worthy of mention, was about how Lt. Col. Gowon was appointed Head of State when there were more senior officers such as Brigadier Ogundipe, Col. Adebayo and Col. Bassey. Col. Ojukwu knew more than anybody that in any coup plot there is a target agenda known only to the coup plotters. Therefore, no leaders of a successful coup would hand over their delicate lives and destiny to any group, especially if known to be opposed to their objectives or ignorant of the purpose of their action. It is indeed unimaginable that the Northerners who executed a genuine coup of revenge, would hand over the hangman's axe to either an Igbo man or a Yoruba man at the material point in time, for being sure that the noose could easily be fastened around their necks. Even the five Igbo Majors who struck on the 15th of January 1966, made it clear during the 24 hours negotiation with Lagos,

that they would allow only an Igbo man to head the Government, after all.

Ojukwu's third argument was that up to 29th July, 1966, he was in full cooperation with the Federal Government headed by an Igbo General in seeking solution to spontaneous riots in some places in the North against Southerners generally and specifically against the Igbos resident in the North. Col. Ojukwu of course chose to ignore that the immediate cause of these riots were, first as a result of the assassination of the Sardaua of Sokoto and Premier of the North, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa the Prime Minister and others by the young Igbo hotheads. And to add insult to injury, the Igbo resident in the North, mistook the calmness and non-violent reaction from the North, as fear or cowardice and started circulating insulting and highly provocative pictures of the late Sardauna in an edition of Drum Magazine owned by their people. That was what fueled and ignited the patriotic northern riots or Araba. If Ojukwu had no ulterior motive therefore, the result of the 29th July 1966 counter coup by the Northerners, should not warrant his infamous declaration that Igbos should pack their bags and baggage and return to the East because their lives were no longer safe. Why did he not make a similar declaration before Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon took over as the new Head of State? His total argument on this would merely amount to masterful deceit or cover-up in order to first, mislead his people by sucking them into the Eastern enclave and secondly, to get them ready and handy for extermination through hunger and vagrancy of civil war even if in his inner mind, he knew that he was no match for the Northern troops. The mere fact that the North, without a single political leader, and without any military officer of or above the

rank of Lt. Colonel (with the exception of one on leave and the other on course outside Nigeria), could organize themselves under the very nose of General Ironsi and his hangmen with their smoking guns and stage a successful daylight coup, should have been a very clear food-for-thought for any serious minded and highly educated military officer, which Ojukwu always claimed to be and for which he has always paraded himself before the lesser mortals of the Eastern State.

**North's Leaders of Thought Meet in Kaduna for Lasting Peace in the North and in Nigeria in General January 1967**

**The Assassination of the Sardauna and other Leaders (Military nd Civilian) necessitated a series of meetings amongst the North's stakeholders to find solutions to the Critical Problems of Security and tension in the Country.**

**(Left to right foreground) Alhaji Abdulganiyu Abdulrazaq; Mr. J.C Obande; Mr. Attah and Alhaji Muhammadu Rufai**

**(Left to right) Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki; Alhaji Abdullahi Kure Muhammed; Alhaji Mohammed Gujbawu and Alhaji Ibrahim Argungu**

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## The Stalemate

By and by, Ojukwu's acts of defiance continued as he raised one condition after another until it became clear that he was only playing for time to actualize his dream of secession. All efforts made by elders, religious and traditional leaders and other eminent personalities to get Ojukwu to come to terms with the Federal Government proved abortive. With each day, the situation became more knotty and tenser, until he forced an impasse and a resort for matters to be settled outside Nigeria, first in Ghana, under the good offices of the Head of State of Ghana, General Ankrah in a place called Aburi.

### Aburi

The situation came to a head and so on the 4th and 5th January 1967, leaders of the Federal Government and Eastern Nigeria met in a town near Accra, known as Aburi, under the auspices of the Head of the then Military Government of Ghana, Lt. Gen. Joseph Ankrah. The Federal side, led by the Head of State of Nigeria, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, went to Aburi with a completely open mind. There was nothing prepared as a pre-condition to the meeting. All that Gowon wanted and religiously hoped for, was the preservation of the federation. He was prepared to accept anything Ojukwu proposed, as long as such demands did not lead to the break-up of the federal status of Nigeria. Gowon strongly believed that any agreement reached would only be on a temporary basis,

just good enough to allow tempers to cool down so that the Nigerian train would resume its course without serious deviation from the fundamentals of the Nigerian Constitution. On the contrary, Ojukwu and his team went to Aburi with a well-prepared draft intended to bargain for at least a sort of confederation in the first place. Once this was achieved, the subsequent action would be to move Eastern Nigeria into full sovereign status as an independent Country.

Writing his memoirs on the Aburi Accord of Saturday 5th July, 1967, veteran journalist, Mr. Alade Odunewu said inter-alia:

*"By the spirit of Aburi, the Military Governors have never had it so bounteous. They are now in such enviable position that would make a colonial governor look like a glorified errand boy.*

*Let's take a cursory look at the constitution produced for Nigeria from the conjurer's tall hat. The legislative and Executive powers of the Federal Government shall rest in the Supreme Military Council. Correct, and so let it be"*

Alhaji Abdulmalik Attah (center) Nigeria's Agent General in London receives Nigerians on a Peace Mission in his office. (Left to right) Mr. S. O. Soyode; Brig. Ogundipe; Col. Austine Peters; Col. D.C. Okafor; Col. Adeyinka Adebayo

***Section 69*** *(6) makes the following provisions:*

*Wherein, intended exercise of power conferred by this section decrees are made:*

*a. Affecting or relating the territorial integrity of a region or*

*b. Altering of any of the provisions of the sections listed in the provision to section 4(1) of this constitution.*

*c. Affecting or relating to the federation in so far as respects trade, commerce, industry, transport, communication, labour, the public service or public finance or*

*d. Affecting or relating to external affairs, Defence, the Navy, the Army, and Air Force, the Nigeria Police, arms and ammunition, the administration of the affairs of a Region and maintaining and securing public order and essential supplies and services, or*

*e. Affecting or relating to the professions as defined in item 13 of the Concurrent Legislative List or to higher educational institution as mentioned in item 17 of the Exclusive List to higher education as defined in item 10 of the Concurrent Legislative List, the Decree shall come into operation only with the concurrent of the Head of the federal Military Government and all of the Military Governors".*

Thus all the meat and potatoes of "effective central authority" are now brought under the controlling teeth of the unanimity role. Lt. Col. Ojukwu summed it up at Aburi. He said, "it is essential that

whatever forms of government we have in the centre, must be limited and controlled by a consensus on which we all agree."

Under civilian rule, all that was required to get business done is two-thirds majority. Now, one disobliging Governor has to say 'halt' and the wheel of Government grinds to a halt. This looks like government by the United Nations Organization, where a chap lurks in the corner with the veto. Surely ours is far from a United Nations. Col. Ojukwu calls it "an association". Any wonder they now appoint a similar chairman for the association?

Section 6(1) says: there shall be for the Federal Republic Executive Council which shall exercise such functions as of Nigeria, a Supreme Military Council and a Federal may be delegated to it by the Supreme Military Council

Does this mean that we now have a government by delegation? Surely the regions had never had it so good. Their Governors are all members of the Supreme Military Council and unlike the Second Republic, they are also members of the Federal Executive Council. In other words, they enjoy dual personalities. The simple implication of this, is that the Federal Cabinet no longer functions as it did in the first Military regime where the Federal Executive replaced the old civilian cabinet".

At Aburi, the military leaders:

1. Agreed to renounce the use of force as a means of settling the Nigerians crisis.

2. Reaffirmed their belief in discussions and negotiation as the only peaceful way of resolving

the country's crisis.

3. Agreed to exchange information on qualities of arms and ammunition of army units in each region.

4. Agreed that, the army was to be governed by the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the chairman of which should also be the Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

5. Agreed that military Headquarters, in which each region was to be represented, was to be set up under a Chief of Staff

6. Agreed that in each region was to be an Area Command under an Area commander.

7. Agreed that the SMC was to deal with all matters of appointment and promotions of people in executive posts in the Armed Forces and the Police.

8. Agreed that Military Governors, for the duration of the Military Government, were to have control over Area Commands in their regions for purposes of internal security.

With regard to appointments in public service, all appointments into the following were to be made by the SMC:

a. Diplomatic and consular posts.

b. Senior posts in the Armed Forces and the police.

c. Super-scale Federal Civil Service and federal Corporations posts.

This was precisely the situation presented to the meeting by Ojukwu, who thought and believed that the Federal side, being composed of a bunch of idiots and pinheads, would swallow his obnoxious documents, hook, line and sinker. Even when Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon made some modifications in his Decree No. 8 purposely to allow tempers to cool, Ojukwu shouted victoriously at Aburi. The singsong of Biafra ran thus "with Aburi we stand! with Aburi we stand and die!"

The substance of Ojukwu's Aburi proposal was such that they would secretly use the period between the attainment of confederate status and sovereignty to secure more arms and ammunition, training of their separate armed forces with which to later conquer the North, before they would later walk over the Mid Western and Westem States and Lagos. In their blind conceit, they did not know that all this was known to Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon and his inner circle advisers. I have already indicated that one of the natural problems of the Igbo from which they had not shown readiness to be cured, is the tendency to underrate the intelligence of all other Nigerians, especially people from the North of the Niger. As a matter of fact, at this juncture, I was one of those convinced that Gowon was drifting, especially considering all the concessions of Aburi. It appeared he had finally deferred to Ojukwu and was ready to run Nigeria on a 50-50 basis with the defiant Governor of the East who had now invoked the relevant Federal Authority. He made edicts that transferred authority over such federal organs as the P & T, the Railways, the Broadcasting Station, the Coal Corporation and the Ports to the Eastern Government. That is to say all revenue accruing to those utilities were to go directly to the Eastern Government.

Ojukwu's role throughout this trying time, in the eyes of the North could be likened to letting your goat on a very long tether, to the extent that the goat began to boast that it was free. While Ojukwu was beating his chest on his achievement at Aburi, which was partially confirmed with modification by Decree No. 8, both the North and Lagos knew in advance that he was not more than a tethered goat, no matter how free he thought he was. Therefore, the entire furore on Aburi was nothing but a mere paper work thrown to the Igbo as a bait, so as to enable the Eastern minorities to actually know the real intention of Ojokwu in particular and igbos in general.

The general belief in many quarters in Nigeria and beyond was that when Gowon met Ojukwu in Aburi, the rebel leader was so well prepared for the meeting that he was seen as having stolen the show with the volume of papers and verbal jingoism his delegation presented. Some post Aburi and post war publications alluded to Ojukwu's sophistry which they saw as having deceived the Nigerian delegation into delivering Biafra's sovereignty to the rebel without even realizing it. Some even saw the Federal side as a rag tag team. Of course this line of thought did not take cognizance of the fact that the behaviour of the Nigerian delegation was a calculated one to lead the rebels on into believing in their own super self importance, so as to give leverage to the psychological impact of the blow when it would be delivered. As a member of the Supreme Military Council and by virtue of my close association with General Gowon, I got to know that the whole story was a mere bunkum and far from the truth for the following reasons:

1. It is true that prior to the meeting, Nigeria did not present a written and articulated position as regards to what she wanted to achieve during the meeting. But this was not to say that all the pros and cons of what was to be done were not previously examined by experts and civilian advisers to General Gowon.

2. The fact that no paper was produced as Ojukwu did was for tactical reasons. For instance, Nigeria's stand on any negotiation whether within or outside Nigeria was to avoid standing at par with a fraction of Nigeria as equal sovereignties before any international forum. In fact, that was the reason why Ojukwu opted for an outside forum so that it could be shown that his Biafra was on an equal footing with Nigeria.

3. Thirdly, General Gowon in his inner wisdom, decided to avoid discussing point by point with the rebel side because Biafra and its leader were mere junior partners in the Nigerian Federation. Therefore, it would be unethical and undiplomatic for the Nigerian delegation to embark on open exchanges and counter arguments with their subjects on matters of absolute sovereignty and before a foreign Head of State and an army of foreign observers, thereby internationalizing the forum to the credit of Ojukwu!

4. This was the stratagem, the main technical and diplomatic position which made General Gowon direct his delegation to quietly record all the submissions of Ojukwu which he (General Gowon) never believed would ever be granted.

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## THE KAMPALA PEACE TEAM

**CHIEF ANTHONY ENAHORO**
**Leader of Delegation**

**MALAM AMINU KANO**

**MR UKPABI ASIKA**

**BRIGADIER OGUNDIPE**

**ALHAJI ALI AKILU**

**COL GEORGE KURUBO**

**COL ILIYA BISALLA**

**ALHAJI LIMAN CIROMA**

**SIR LUIS MBANEFO**

In addition to this, General Gowon had alway considered his secret solutions to the option proposed by Ojukwu, should the situation become dangerous. This joker was cleverly kept to his chest and that was why the minutes and communiqué of the meeting and the subsequent over reactions by Ojukwu were superficially accepted and noted so long as they did not lead to a declaration of sovereignty by the rebel group. No doubt, Col. Ojukwu did not understand General Gowon's apparent acceptance of the communiqué and went ahead to commence acts of illegality against the sovereignty of Nigeria through seizures of federal assets and hostile pronouncements.

At this auspicious moment, the Federal Government played its joker-abrogating Decree No. 8, which was in fact merely meant to provide respite and cool tempers before creating the twelve states in the country on the 27th May, 1967, three days before Ojukwu's declaration of disengagement of the former Eastern Nigeria from the Federation of Nigeria. The full text of Gowon's famous and historic speech is reproduced below

**Broadcast to the Nation by Col. Yakubu Gowon, Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces-May 27th 1967**

*Dear Countrymen,*

*As you are all aware, Nigeria has been immersed in an extremely grave crisis for almost eighteen months. We have now reached a most critical phase where what is at stake is the very survival of Nigeria as one political and economic entity. We must rise to the challenge and what we do in the next few days will be decisive.*

*The whole world is witness to the continued defiance of Federal Authority by the Government of the Eastern Region, the disruption of the Railways, the Coal Corporation, the normal operations of the Nigerian Ports Authority, the interference with the flight schedules of the Nigeria Airways and other illegal acts by the Eastern Region Government, culminating in the edicts promulgated last month by that Government purporting to seizing all Federal Statutory Corporations and Federal Revenues collected in the East.*

*The consequence of these illegal acts has been the increasing deterioration of the Nigerian economy. It has also produced uncertainty and insecurity generally and pushed the country with increasing tempo towards total disintegration and possible civil war and bloodshed on a massive scale.*

*has also led to increasing loss of foreign confidence in the ability of Nigerians to resolve the present problems. This has been reflected in the stoppage of the inflow of much badly needed additional foreign investment. It has put a brake on economic development so essential to the well-being of the common man and the ordinary citizen whose only desire is for peace and stability to carry on his daily work.*

*In the face of all these, I have shown great restraint hoping that through peaceful negotiations a solution acceptable to all sections of the country can be found. Unfortunately, the hopes of myself and my other colleagues on the Supreme Military Council have been disappointed by the ever-increasing campaign of hate by the Governor of the Eastern Region. Lt. Col. Ojukwu has continuously increased his demands as soon as some are met in order to perpetuate the crisis and lead the Eastern Region*

*out of Nigeria. We know very well the tragic consequences of such a misguided step. Not only will the regions themselves disintegrate further, but before then, pushed by foreign powers and mercenaries who will interfere, this dear country will be turned into a bloody stage for chaotic and wasteful civil war.*

*When the tragic event of January 15th, 1966 occurred, the country acquiesced in the installation of a military regime only because it desired that order and discipline should be restored in the conduct of the affairs of this country; that swift reforms will be introduced to produce just and honest Government, to usher in stability and ensure fair treatment of all citizens in every part of the country. The citizens of this country have not given the Military Regime any mandate to divide up the country into sovereign states and to plunge them into bloody disaster.*

*As I have warned before, my duty is clearly faced with this final choice between action to save Nigeria and acquiescence in secession and disintegration. I am therefore proclaiming a state of emergency throughout Nigeria with immediate effect. I have assumed full powers as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Head of the Federal Military Government for the short period necessary to carry through the measures which are now urgently required. In this period of emergency, no political statements in the press, on the Radio and television and all publicity media or any other political activity will be tolerated. The Military and Police are empowered to deal summarily with any offenders. Newspaper editors are particularly urged to cooperate with the authorities to assure the success of these measures.*

## General Gowon's Military Governors and Administrator Were Also Members of the Supreme Military Council SMC

ALHAJI USMAN FARUK
NORTHWESTERN STATE

MR. UKPABI ASIKA
EAST CENTRAL STATE

MAJOR (BRIG.)MOBOLAJI JOHNSON,
LAGOS STATE

MAJOR ( BRIG.)ABBA KYARI
NORTH CENTRAL STATE

MAJOR (BRIG.) SAM OGBEMUDIA
MIDWEST STATE

COMM. ALFRED DIETE SPIFF
RIVERS STATE

ALHAJI AUDU BAKO
KANO STATE

COL ( GEN) ADEYINKA ADEBAYO
WESTERN STATE

MAJOR(BRIG)MUSA USMAN
NORTH-EASTERN STATE

MR. J.D. GOMWALK
BENUE PLATEAU STATE

MAJOR(BRIG) DAVID BAMGBOYE
KWARA STATE

COL.(BRIG) U J ESUENE
SOUTH EASTERN STATE

*I have referred earlier to some illegal acts of the Eastern Region Government. You all know that about one third of the entire rolling stock of the Nigerian Railways, including 115 oil tankers, has been detained and that the services of the Eastern District of the Nigerian Railway have been completely disrupted for many months. You are aware of the way they have disrupted the direct movement of oil products from the refinery near Port Harcourt to the Northern region. They have hindered the transit of goods to neighboring countries and have even seized goods belonging to foreign countries. These acts have flagrantly violated normal international practice and disturbed friendly relations with our neighbours. That refinery is owned jointly by the Federal Government and the Regional Government. Illegally, since last year, the Authorities at Enugu have interfered with the flight routes of the Nigeria Airways. Only recently, they committed the barbaric crime of hi-jacking a plane bound for Lagos from Benin. They have placed a ban on the residence of non-Easterners in the Eastern Region, an action which is against the constitution and the fundamental provisions of our laws. They have continuously on the press and radio incited the people of the Eastern Region to hatred of other Nigerian peoples and they have indulged in the crudest abuse of members of the supreme military council, especially myself.*

*Despite all these, I have spared no effort to conciliate the East in recognition of their understandable grievances and fears since the tragic incidents of 1966. To this end, I agreed with my other colleagues on the Supreme Military Council to the promulgation of Decree No. 8, which completely decentralized the Government of this country and even went further than the Republican Constitution*

*as it existed before January 15, 1966. But what has been the response of the Eastern Region Government? Complete rejection of Decree No. 8 and insistence on its separate existence as a sovereign unit.*

*Only recently, a group of distinguished citizens formed themselves into the National Conciliation Committee. They submitted recommendations aimed at reducing tension. These included the reciprocal abrogation of economic measures taken by the Federal Military Government and the seizure of Federal Statutory Corporations and Federal Revenues by the Eastern Government. These reciprocal actions were to be taken within one week that is by May 25th 1967. It is on record that I accepted the recommendations and issued instructions effective from Tuesday May 23. Indeed I now understand that certain vehicles of the Posts and Telegraphs Department which went to the East in resumption of services have been illegally detained in that Region. The response of the East has been completely negative and they have continued their propaganda and stage-managed demonstrations for "independence".*

*Fellow citizens, I recognize, however, that the problem of Nigeria extends beyond the present misguided actions of the Eastern Region Government. My duty is to all citizens. I propose to treat all sections of the country with equality. The main obstacle to future stability in this country is the present structural imbalance in the Nigerian Federation.*

*Even Decree No. 8 or Confederation or Loose Association will never survive if any one section of the country is in a position to hold the others to ransom.*

*This is why the first item in the Political and Administrative Programme adopted by the Supreme Military Council last month, is the creation of states as a basis for stability. This must be done first so as to remove the fear of domination. Representatives drawn from the new states will be more able to work out the future constitution for this country which can contain provisions to protect the powers of the states to the fullest extent desired by the Nigerian people. As soon as these states are established, a new Revenue Allocation Commission consisting of international experts will be appointed to recommend an equitable formula for revenue allocation taking into account the desire of the states.*

*I propose to act faithfully within the Political and Administrative Programme adopted by the Supreme Military Council and published last month. The world will recognize in these proposals our desire for justice and fair play for all sections of this country and to accommodate all genuine aspirations of the diverse people of this great country.*

*I have ordered the re-imposition of the economic measures designed to safeguard Federal interests until such time as the Eastern Military Government abrogates its illegal edicts on revenue collection and the administration of the Federal Statutory Corporations based in the East. The country has a long history of well-articulated demands for states. The fears of minorities were explained in great detail and set out in the report of the Willink Commission appointed by the British in 1958. More recently there has been an extensive discussion in Regional Consultative Committees and Leaders-of-thoughts conferences. Resolutions have been adopted demanding the creation of states in the North and in Lagos. Petitions from minority areas in the East*

*which have been subjected to violent intimidation by the Eastern Military Government have been widely publicized. While the present circumstances regrettably do not allow for consultations through plebiscites, I am satisfied that the creation of new states as the only possible basis for stability and equality is the overwhelming desire of vast majority of Nigerians. To ensure justice, these states are being created simultaneously. To this end therefore, I am promulgating a Decree which will divide the Federal Republic into twelve states. The twelve states will be three in the present Northern Region, three in the present Eastern Region, the Mid-West will remain as it is, the Colony Province of the Western Region and Lagos will form a new Lagos State and the Western Region will otherwise remain as it is. I must emphasize at once, that the Decree will provide for a State Delimitation Commission which will ensure that any divisions or towns not satisfied with the states in which they are initially grouped will obtain redress. But in this moment of serious national emergency, the cooperation of all concerned is absolutely essential in order to avoid any unpleasant consequences.*

*I wish also to emphasize that an Administrative Council will be established at the capitals of the existing regions which will be available to the new states to ensure the smoothest possible administrative transition in the establishment of the new states. The twelve new states, subject to marginal boundary adjustments will therefore be as follows:*

***North Western State**: Comprising Sokoto and Niger Provinces*

***North Central State**: Comprising Katsina and Zaria Provinces*

***Kano State**: Comprising the present Kano Province*

***North Eastern State**: Comprising Borno, Adamawa, Sardaua and Bauchi Provinces*

***Benue/Plateau State**: Comprising Benue and Plateau Provinces*

***West Central State**: Comprising Ilorin and Kabba Provinces*

***Lagos State**: Comprising the Colony Province and the Federal Territory of Lagos*

***Western State**: Comprising the present Western Region but excluding the colony Province*

***Mid-Western State**: (as existing)*

***East Central State**: Comprising the present Eastern Region Excluding Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers Provinces*

***South Eastern State**: Comprising Calabar and Ogoja Provinces; and*

***Rivers State**: Comprising Ahoada, Brass, Degema, Ogoni and Port Harcourt Divisions.*

*The states will be free to adopt any particular names they choose in the future. The immediate administrative arrangements for the new states have been planned and the names of the Military Governors appointed to the new states will be gazetted shortly.*

*The allocation of federally collected revenue to the new states on an interim basis for the first few months has also been planned. The successor states in each former region will share the revenue of that region on the equitable basis of their populations until a more permanent formula is recommended by the new Revenue Allocation Commission. Suitable arrangements have been made to minimize any disruption in the normal functioning of services in the areas of the new states.*

*It is my fervent hope that the existing Regional Authorities will cooperate fully to ensure the smoothest possible establishment of the new states. It is also my hope that the need to use force to support any new state will not arise. I am however, ready to protect any citizens of this country who are subject to intimidation or violence in the course of establishment of these new states.*

*My dear countrymen, the struggle ahead is for the well being of the present and future generations of Nigerians. If it were possible for us to avoid chaos and civil war merely by drifting apart as some claim, that easy choice may have been taken. But we know that to take such a course will quickly lead to the disintegration of the existing regions in condition to chaos and to disastrous foreign interference. We now have to adopt the courageous course of facing the fundamental problem that has plagued this country since the early 50's There should be no recrimination. We must all resolve to work together. It is my hope that those who disagreed in the past with the Federal Military Government through genuine misunderstanding and mistrust will now be convinced of our purpose and be willing to come back and let us plan and work together for the realization of the political and administrative programme of the*

*Supreme Military Council, and for the early restoration of full civilian rule in circumstances which would enhance just and honest and patriotic government. I appeal to the general public to continue to give their cooperation to the federal Military Government; to go about their normal business peacefully; to maintain harmony with all communities wherever they live; to respect all directives of the Government including directives restricting the movements of people while the emergency remains.* Such directives are for their own protection and their own interest.

Let us therefore march manfully together to alter the course of this nation once and for all and to place it on the path of progress, unity and equality. Let us so act that future generations of Nigerians will praise us for our resolution and courage in this critical stage of our country's history. Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

In retrospect, one of the far reaching consequences in the exercise of the 12 states creation was the strategic loss of any access to the sea by the Igbo.

Map 5: January 1966 – Nigeria Highlighting the Position of the Former Eastern Region Before the Start of the Conflict which Ojukwu Believed the Igbos would win Based Upon their Misguided Concept of Superiority over other Nigerian Ethnic Groups

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## The Dawn of a New Era

Nigeria was on the verge of collapse under the weight and threat of secession by the then Eastern Region, as a result of a major build up of civil disturbances, consequent upon the military coup of January 1966 and the counter coup of July. Barely a week after the second coup of 29th July 1966, the Easterners threw restraint to the winds and allowed their fiery emotion to take over their heads. Their various organs of information dished out on a daily basis and regular consistency, news reports and broadcasts that they knew were sure to cause further disaffection in the country. They carried news which were absolutely false, published criminally distorted views and said things that were obviously in open defiance of the National Government. The worst offenders were the Eastern Nigerian Broadcasting Service (ENBS) and **THE OUTLOOK**.

The sensational jingoisms in falsehoods and rumours were the clear indicators of the real intentions of the Easterners. That Yakubu Gowon did not take immediate decisive steps then to nip all the problems in the bud was his first faltering step. The diet of incitement and falsehood with which the eastern press fed its people on a daily basis reached all parts of the country as a clear indication of a rebellion. It was wondered nationwide why that open defiance of authority, that perfidious insolence and that call to disorder was allowed to go unpunished by government.

Repeatedly, newspapers carried a catalogue of daily measures taken by the Northern Nigerian Government to forestall the total breakdown of law and order and of the country. From mid August to October 1966, the events showed clearly that the East was spoiling for a showdown, going by the reports. In its own good sense, the government of Northern Nigeria had refuted the stupid allegations that refugees returning to the East from the North were being molested by Northern hooligans. Seeing the propaganda image of the allegations, the government even went further to issue instructions to all the Native Authorities to ensure that no irresponsible behaviour was recorded on their part with regard to the safety of fleeing Easterners.

Meanwhile, all entreaties to the eastern cabal fell on deaf ears as they were only using the allegations and rumour mongering to attract cheap sympathy and at the same time divert attention from their schemes.

The Eastern Region, under the leadership of the Military Governor, Col. E. Ojukwu, had been reported to be preparing to declare secession of the entire Region from the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This move was preempted and countered by the Gowon's announcement of the creation of 12 states within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Six states in southern Nigeria and six states in the North were created and named. The announcement came up at midnight of May the 27th 1967.

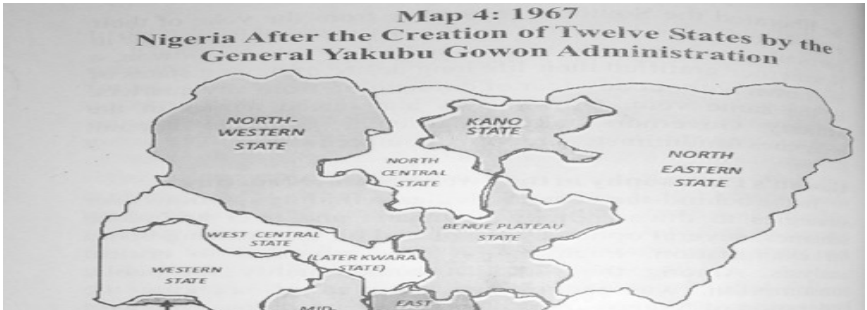
After the invigorating announcement, I must again confess, Gowon's image loomed larger than life before me, as I am sure with others. At least in the most unexpected manner, he liberated the Southern minorities from the yoke of their erstwhile overlords. Rivers and South Eastern states people in

particular had cause to sing "Eureka" as Yakubu Gowon, a Northerner gratified their life long desire of having states of their own without any fear of domination from any quarters. In the same vein, Gowon also announced names of the Military Governors taking particular pains to appoint indigenes to administer the entire Southern states.

## Gowon's Philosophy in the Twelve States Structure

In the behind-the-scene activities in finding solutions to or strategies to thwart Ojukwu's lunatic and over ambitions schemes, several options were placed on the drawing board for examination. Each option was subjected to critical analysis. Among the few that could qualify for public consumption, was the clairvoyant plan of breaking the Federation of Nigeria into states three days before Ojukwu's intention to declare a formal secession from the Federation of Nigeria. The following is the summary of the reasons and points considered by both the Federal Government and the Northern Region's top elite. These options, it was believed, would throw the first spanner into Ojukwu's mad engine of secession.

1. The twelve states (12) created were meant to pre-empt Ojukwu's impending declaration of secession of the entire former Eastern Region with a new name Biafra from the rest of the Nigerian Federation.



2. The second intention of General Gowon's philosophy was to drive a powerful wedge between the Igbo majority of the same geographical spread and the non-Igbos. Thus, by creating South Eastern and Rivers States, Gowon had effectively created a very serious opposition within the new so-called Biafran state. For instance, the South Eastern State with its capital at Calabar harbored an age long animosity and political opposition to the Igbos who had dominated the ethnic groups from that area for long.

3/The new Rivers State, with its capital at Port-Harcourt was the natural home of minorities living between the main Igbos in the central region and the sea. The Rivers State people too had, for centuries, toiled and lived under the yoke of Igbo domination. Until Gowon's famous act of creating states, the entire people occupying the various lagoons, creeks and numerous islands were actually strangers in their homeland. They lived virtually as tenants and hewers of stones and firewood for their masters, the Igbos. The latter had spread from the Igbo hinterland of Enugu, Aba, Umahia, Owerri, into the territories of their subjects the Ijaws, the Ekweres etc.

2. The third thrust of the policy was both economic and military. By carving out and constituting South Eastern and Rivers States from the eastern flank of former Eastern Region (which are the two new states harboring all the known oil reserves of Nigeria),

the Igbos' bargaining power with the outside world for recognition in return for cheap oil (Kuwait type situation) was effectively knocked down. It immediately sent ripples in the spines of all foreign companies and foreign Governments that were eager to throw their weight behind Ojokwu and his henchmen. The potential investors (spurious and genuine) and foreign meddlers immediately began to weigh the enormous consequences of investing in a very risky war terrain, as well as the uncertainty that lay ahead regarding which way the tide of the eventual war would turn.

4. The fourth factor which was very well calculated by the Federal Government was the effect of commercial blockade of shipping facilities consequent upon having two states controlling all entries to the Igbo mainland. That is, the coming into existence of the two newly created Rivers and South-Eastern states, sooner or later, would block direct international trade with the entire remnant of the Eastern Region (i.e. the main Igbo ethnic group).

5. The fifth cornerstone of the isolation of the Igbo was the appointment of the Military Governors of South Eastern and Rivers states. In each case, very careful consideration was given to appoint not only indigenes of the area, but also patriotic ones, who were more determined to liberate their people from the century old bondage of Igbo oligarchy. Thus, both Lt. Col. Jacob Esuene and Navy Commander Alfred Diete-Spiff spared no time in rising to the occasion, mobilizing their people to the noble cause of establishing veritable governments for *Their People.*

6. The final straw that broke the camel's back was when Nigeria applied what was known as 'plugging the

loopholes', by suddenly changing its currency. That singular act, suddenly caused total confusion in the limping economy and monetary system of Biafra. All along, the Biafran authorities never believed that other Nigerians had the brain to bring off such a feat as they used to boast that the Igbos were the engine of the Nigerian train, while the remaining Nigerians were merely the coaches. Therefore, the moment they were not there, our train would stop dead.

All Military and security personnel within the Federal side were placed on maximum alert and all leaves and passes cancelled. From all indications, the country was poised for a major civil upheaval of a civil war magnitude.

The following day, the 28th May 1967, my family and I were all sitting in the sitting room of my official quarters at No. 4 Sultan Road Kaduna G R A, with our ears literally glued to the radio, anxiously awaiting the Federal announcement of the names of governors, for the newly created 12 states. Tension was so high that there was no room for speculation. For in those days, to be Governor, was to be condemned to death. In fact, young officers lobbied not to be appointed to serve as A.D.Cs. Then, as if from the blues, came the announcement in the afternoon, in which my name was listed as one of the Military Governors. Specifically, I was named the Military Governor of the Northwestern state of Nigeria, with temporary Headquarters at Sokoto. Northwestern state comprised of the old Sokoto and Niger Provinces, with a population of about 5.6 million people. The full details of the announcement of the new states were as follows:

**The New Administrative Setup**

| | S/No | States | Military Governors | Capitals | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | North Western State | Superintendent of Police Usman Faruk | Sokoto | |
| | 2 | North Eastern State | Major Musa Usman | Maiduguri | |
| | 3 | North Central State | Major Abba Kyari | Kaduna | |
| | 4 | Kano State | Asst. Com. Pol. Audu Bako | Kano | |
| | 5 | Benue/Plateau State | Chief Supt. Pol. J. D. Gomwalk | Jos | |
| | 6 | Kwara State | Major David Bamigboye | Ilorin | |
| | 7 | Lagos State | Major Mobalaji Johnson | Lagos | |
| | 8 | Western State | Col. R. Adeyinka Adebayo | Ibadan | |
| | 9 | Mid Western State | Col. David Ejoor | Benin | |
| | 10 | Rivers State | Lt. Comd. Alfred Diete Spiff | Port Harcourt | |
| | 11 | South Eastern State | Major U. J. Esuene | Calabar | |
| | 12 | East Central State | Mr. Ukpabi Asika | Enugu | |

No sooner had the announcement been made than my family and I were left speechless. We just could not

believe what had been said, more especially that my name was first announced as Mr. Umar Faruk. As there were other officers with almost similar names in the Police Force, made things even more confusing. But then, to our further amazement, a stream of people, some of them police officers that were senior to me, started pouring into our house to congratulate us. The first to walk in was our neighbor, in person of Mr. Anoja, who was then a Chief Superintendent of Police and my senior. Then others came pouring in. I tried to ring the then commissioner of police for the whole Northern Region, in the person of Mallam Hamman Maiduguri, to solve the riddle of my name being there at all. I was told that he had gone to Lagos early in the morning of that day. I similarly tried contacting the office of His Excellency, Major Hassan Usman Katsina, the then Governor for the whole Northern Region. The reply I got left me more confused than ever about the announcement. I was simply thrown into complete uncertainity. Nobody could solve the mystery of the name Umar Faruk for me except the police at the Nigeria Police Force Headquarters, which had the master list of all Senior Officers.

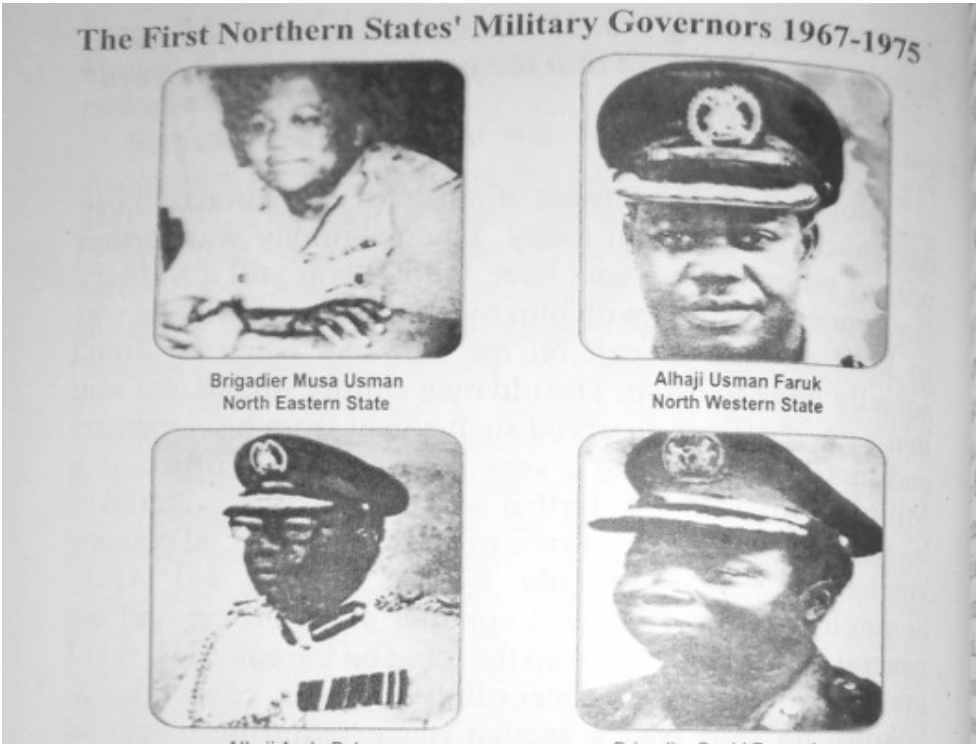
The 30th of May 1967, brought in very little relief for me. I first reported to my office as P.P.O in the Central Police Station only to be swarmed by people and officers who came to congratulate me. Still, I found it difficult to accept the situation because there was no confirmation from the Commissioner of Police. Secondly, there was no signal message from either the Police Headquarters in Lagos or the Army Supreme Headquarters. Thirdly, in the absence of these, coupled with the fact that as a Senior Police Officer, I just would not believe they could make a mistake in my name. 'My name', I kept on saying, 'is Usman Faruk, and not ume Faruk', and no Police Force Headquarters could make such a mistake.

Something unusual that was to provide solace to my discomfort happened to me the previous evening of 27th May 1967. That day, at about 5:00pm, barely seven hours before that midnight announcement of the Federal Government, the Commissioner of Police in charge of Northern Region, Alhaji Hamman Maiduguri, who was then our overall Police boss in the North drove personally to my quarters accompanied by his wife Hajiya Mariam Maiduguri. In those days (and I guess even now) it was not at all normal for a Commissioner of Police to visit a subordinate officer, let alone present him with some entertainment. For he brought with him some soft drinks, cakes and biscuits for my family, instead of me falling over myself trying to please him and his wife. It was indeed unusual and it took us a long time to decipher the riddle. The Commissioner apparently had prior knowledge of the Federal Government announcement that night. He was also aware that I was to be one of the Military Governors and that was the reason of the visit to me. But then in those days, secrets were secrets, in the true sense of the word, especially among the northern officers of any security service. This is in contrast to what obtains these days, where senior officers give privileged information to their subordinates in order to get something out of them. It is common to hear this kind of statement from such officers:

*Listen young man, I have recommended you for so and so post", so that the young officer will have to" do something.*

Not so with the seniors of northern extraction of those days and I guess even today. This testimony was further proved when a few years later, while I

was still a Military Governor, I pleaded with him to educate me on why he was so kind enough to call on me that day when he didn't actually have to do so. The old man simply smiled and said that a good officer deserved such a visit from his superiors and that he wished me a very good tenure of office as a Military Governor. He further said that I was considered to be appointed as the Governor of Sokoto for special reasons emphasizing that aptitude by the Police and Army hierarchy were the code of conduct of an officer and his general personality make up the icing on the cake, and that I must conduct myself according to their expectations. Sokoto, he said was a special place requiring a special handling and that was why I was chosen. I have great respect for late Assistant Inspector General of Police Hamman Maiduguri and the type of tutelage he gave us. May his soul rest in peace, Amen.



## Swearing in Ceremony in Lagos

The next day, word came round that the new Governors were wanted in Lagos by the Head of State, His Excellency, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon. I was bundled to Lagos with the same feeling and conviction that I was not the one. As soon as I got to Lagos, I went straight to the Inspector General of Police, Alhaji Kam Selem's office in order to solve the mystery of the name to me. He at once confirmed that it was me they meant, and that it was at the council meeting that the secretaries read Mr. U. Faruk as Mr. Umaru Faruk, because anybody called Faruk is also known as Umaru in Hausa. A few hours later, the Head of State swore us in. After the oath was administered the attention of the Secretaries was drawn to the mix up in my name. This was noted and a few months later, I received my certificate of appointment containing my proper names, Mr. Usman Faruk. This explains why I have today two letters of appointment, the first bearing Mr. Umaru Faruk, and the subsequent one bearing Mr. Usman Faruk. In his swearing-in speech of the 31st May 1967, the Head of State after reviewing the circumstances of the current situation succinctly outlined our new responsibilities as Military Governors as follows:

*Your duties as Military Governors of the new states are to establish the nucleus of the administration in your states. As members of the Supreme Military Council, you have a duty to help the Federal Government to maintain or re-establish Federal Authority in your areas of jurisdiction. Each state is equal in all respects to other states. You, as*

*Military Governors, therefore, have full powers over all constitutional responsibilities allocated to states. No one Military Governor is subordinate to another in the discharge of his constitutional responsibilities.*

After the swearing in ceremony, we returned to Kaduna on the 31st May 1967 to be briefed by Lt. Col. Hassan Usman Katsina, who had been re-designated Chairman of the Interim Common Services of the Northern States, following the creation of such a body by a new decree. The new authority was to share the assets and liabilities of the six Northern states between the newly created states. In his written address, the Ciroman Katsina dwelt extensively on the major priorities and problems that we had to address.

Here is the full address of the Head of State to the new Military Governors:

**Opening Address by the Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon**

*Gentlemen, welcome to Dodan Barracks:*

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your new assignment as Military Governors of our new states.

I wish to emphasize that this is a temporary job, which you are being called upon as good soldiers and Police officers to perform. We are all to re-establish a new Nigeria and go back to the barracks. My advice is that you should not approach your new jobs as politicians but as professional soldiers. Your duty as Military Governors of the new states is

to establish the nucleus of the administration in your states and to function as the Head of the Government to be established in the states. As members of the Supreme Military Council, you have a duty to help the Federal Military Government to maintain or re-establish Federal Authority in your areas of jurisdiction. Each state is an autonomous unit within the Federation of Nigeria. Each state is equal in all respects to other states. You as Military Governors, therefore, have full powers over all constitutional responsibilities allocated to the states. No one Military Governor is subordinate to another in the discharge of his constitutional responsibilities.

I am aware that there has been some concern over the establishment of the administrative council for the new states created out of the former Northern Region. This administrative committee is not a council of the states in the Region as reported in some newspapers. You will soon discover in your new states that there are many administrative and financial questions, which have to be resolved in the process of establishing the administrative machinery in your new state. In creating six civil services out of the existing Northern Nigeria Civil Service, we will face questions of staffing, regular payments of salary and other details which have to be properly coordinated if we are to have a smooth transitional period. The Administrative Council will fade away when the new states have been firmly established in the near future.

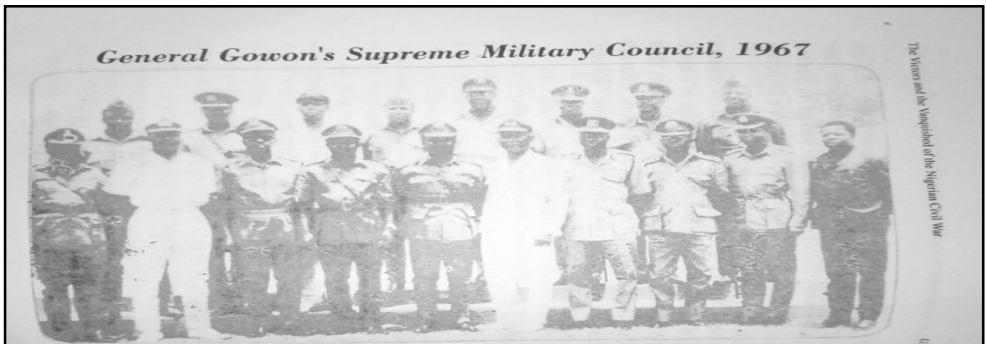
I am sure that when you get to your new states you will be confronted with complaints and anxieties about various divisions from some of your people who feel that they have been grouped in the wrong states. You are to explain to them that the States

Delimitation Commission will deal with such petitions in accordance with my recent broadcast (a copy of which has been distributed to you).

As you are aware, we are in a State of National Emergency where we must all work together to preserve the territorial integrity of Nigeria. The existing Area Commands and the arrangements for the Police will therefore continue for the period of the national emergency. My well-known basic political objective is that if we are to save Nigeria as a country, the Nigerian Army must be preserved as one Army.

I have really summoned all of you here to wish you the best of luck in your new assignments and to hand over to you your instruments of appointments. You will now proceed to your temporary headquarters as soon as expedient and see to what extent you can contribute your quota to the restoration of law and order in Nigeria and the preservation of the Federal Republic. This is time for action not words.

This was a clear departure from the Ironsi Government which had no specific programme or knowledge of what to do with power. Ojukwu had reportedly asked Ironsi; after that type of meeting: "Sir, if we get to our Regions, what are our duties?" Ironsi had replied after a pause, thus: "Emeka, you are a soldier, Go and do your duty". But, what duty?!



# CHAPTER NINE

## Beginning of the Civil War

Few days after creating the twelve (12) states and appointing eleven (11) Military Governors and one Civilian Administrator to run the affairs of the new states, the political situation worsened. Rather than softening and opening dialogue with well meaning people, seeing reason, and pondering over both remote and immediate consequences of the Federal Government's policy statement, Ojukwu, smarting under pseudo superiority of education (but without common sense) responded with the declaration of war. He did that because, first, he was shocked that the Federal Government led by "semi educated sons and daughters of lepers and blind men" could ever have the temerity to put up such a far-reaching strategy of winding Biafra up even before it had started breathing- by creating states in Nigeria. Secondly, he did that because at that time, he had carried out a census of the Igbo Military Personnel with their counterparts in the Police, Prisons, Immigration and Customs, and had come to the conclusion that the combined members of such personnel including those of Ika Ibo from the Mid-western Nigeria, were more than twice the number of similar personnel left in the Northern States. Ojukwu of course, never believed the Yorubas in the western states would ever fight along side Northerners against him. Furthermore, he believed strongly that Yorubas even if they teamed up with Northerners, were never a threat, because in his own

estimation and indeed the estimation of all Igbo soldiers. Yoruba soldiers were incapable of putting up any meaningful fight against the "red devils" of Biafra. In fact even if they did, Ojukwu never considered that a Yoruba soldier, no matter how highly placed, was good enough a soldier to pose a threat to any average Igbo man in uniform. That was the rating of the average Yoruba soldier in the eyes of an Igbo man, not until the Commander of the 3rd Marine Commando, Col. Adekunle and later Col. Olusegun Obasanjo gave the Igbos a surprise run from Rivers State into their backyard. Thirdly, he did so because he was aware of one very important factor. This was that the Biafrans had superiority in both local and small arms over both the northern states and the Federal Government. This was because from the day a call was sent out to the Igbos to come back home at the beginning of the crisis, it was also directed that every serving Igbo man must return to Biafra with his articles of trade. Meaning, if you were a Police Officer, you must come back home with your weapon or your vehicle if you were a driver. I know this because of my connections as a Senior Special Detective based in C.I.D Headquarters, Alagbon, in Lagos. This movement went on from 15th January 1966, until Ojukwu declared war on Nigeria in 1967. Under this ethnic directive, large stocks of small arms, ammunition, communication gadgets of Military, Police, Customs and Immigration were illegally and fraudulently transferred to the eastern enclave. In fact,
it became a passion for each family or community to celebrate any useful logistic material stolen or illegally obtained or smuggled from any part of Nigeria into Biafra.

This reprehensible practice by all levels of personnel did not begin and end with materials, but

also included Federal Governments funds and securities held under the custody of any authorized Igbo public servant. In a similar manner, a warning cry went out to all Igbo union branches, that any body who did not transfer his money to Biafra did so at his or her peril. This was nothing short of preparation for war, but the Federal Government, never gave serious thought to their implication until the day Ojukwu actually declared war. Information later received proved that he had started training an army, the so-called Biafran Army immediately he ordered his men home from other parts of the country. In retrospect, that is the real genesis of the current nation-wide problems of insecurity, armed robberies, vandalism, criminal hostage taking and cheating by deceit, otherwise known as four-one-nine (419).

## Beginning of Hostilities

When Ojukwu declared secession of the Eastern States from Nigeria under the name of Biafra on 30th May 1967, he was fully prepared for a civil war with Nigeria. However, Nigeria's reaction was only for order for a Police action, with the sole intention of capturing Ojukwu and thus forestalling the break-up of the Federation. No real preparation was made, with the exception of deployment of a few military units stationed in the northern states to areas along East Central and South Eastern States, as well as MidWestern fronts, just to maintain law and order. Similarly, police were given orders to deploy their personnel to flash points along the northern and eastern borders just in case an unusual security situation arose.

It never dawned on us in the northern states, that we were only a few hours away from a well-planned

civil war. In fact by the time the hour arrived, at mid-day of 6 July, 1967, we had practically nothing in store to carry out even the police action, which the Federal Government ordered to be embarked upon in response to Ojukwu's action. Few hours after Ojukwu's declaration, the well-oiled odious rebel propaganda machinery and men went into action almost simultaneously. The rebels-in-arms immediately crossed into northern territories and outraged innocent citizens by looting property and shooting down unarmed and innocent people. Within hours, we started receiving reports of pillage coming down from our new war front sectors of the Benue border with the eastern states particularly around Makurdi.

Nigeria never believed that Ojukwu would actually start a shooting war with his country. This explained why it took the Federal troops more than six (6) months to be in a state of combat readiness. The situation would be better appreciated if one remembers that no retraining, no recruitment and no war propaganda was anticipated, let alone, putting these things into practice. When it came to possession of arms, the Federal Government was worse off. It is inexplicable to the ordinary man that only the old big guns of the No. 1 Brigade of the Nigerian Army were in the possession of the Nigerian Government. Guns that had only ammunition to last the fighting units for not more than a week. On the other hand, Ojukwu was well prepared for the onslaught. He did all within his means, to secretly build up armaments in the name of the Federal Government, from the day Ironsi appointed him Military Governor of Eastern Region. He knew that he would not allow one inch of Biafran soil to fall into the hands of the Federal troops. No wonder he continued boasting, publicly, that no black power in the whole of Africa could conquer Biafra.

One thing must be conceded to Ojukwu. He could sway his audience with rhetoric. Commenting on Ojukwu's place in the history of Nigeria, one resident within the Biarfan enclave said that the right place for Ojukwu should have been in Hollywood, where he could have made millions of dollars as an actor. He kept the Easterners absolutely believing in his magical and oratorical tactics. A typical embodiment of what people call an empty drum! A type of man who would hold his audience spellbound with moving theories of how to make millions but who would later ask for a naira from one of the passers-by or members of his audience to enable him buy a cigarette. Indeed, no inch of Biafran soil was conquered, except that the Head of State c the dream Biarfa had to flee to another country, leaving behind the entire land to his so-called "*incompetent*" but victorious northern' troops- with *no turanci, no takarda. Haba abi oxford degree no sabi fire gun well-well?.*

## Federal Government's Attitude Towards the Commencement of the War

Meanwhile, as all men of good will were waiting for Ojukwu the panjandrum to show contrition, he was busy with new propaganda and was boasting of an army fully equipped with weapons and armour. On the other hand, the Federal troops, mainly from the North, had virtually nothing to show regarding possession of or acquisition of arms. Why? This was because some top brass at the Defence Headquarters, headed by Southerners, never imagined that the Federal Government would go to war. The only thing they considered near war was some knowledge of the

fact that northern elements in the Federal Government had moved into some strategic areas in the northern states. With this apathy on the part of some key federal officers of southern origin, it meant that the war was being reduced to the North versus the East. So how on earth would the North rake up the means of acquiring arms and armour to contain the advance of Biafra and its attack on the Northern areas? To compound the situation of the federal units in the North, the Commander of the One Division of the Nigerian Army, Colonel Mamman Shuwa, who proved to be the best field commander that ever commanded any unit during the Nigerian civil war, said that he had hardly enough arms and logistics for even one battalion out of the several battalions under his division. For clarity and for the sake of those readers who are not familiar with military terminology, a division has more than three brigades. Each brigade may be not less than three battalions, consisting of about six hundred soldiers each. In other words, a division may have at least three thousand men under arms. In the case of Muhammad Shuwa, he had less than 200 men under arms

## The Disposition of Arms Before the 1966 Coup

While dealing with the subject of inadequacy of arms at the commencement of the war in the northern states, it is relevant to recall an episode between the late Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, with a European friend. The latter, having studied the prevailing security situation in Nigeria especially following the turbulence of 1965, consequent upon the federal elections won by the Premier's party, the N.P.C. advised the Sardauna on the dire need for acquiring arms, at least by his

party. This was in order to first counter hooliganism of the main opposition, the Action Group, which was hell bent on undermining the NPC's victory by sheer force of illegal arms and weapons through a method known in Nigerian politics as thuggery. The AG had perfected this with Operation "Wetie". Sardauna later passed this confidential topic to Wamban Daura, a northern Minister then, (later the Emir of Daura), Alhaji Mamman Bashar. Final conclusions were made for several visits to foreign friends of the Sardauna by small delegates of some of his highly trusted aides, headed by his Minister Alhaji Bashar the Wamban Daura. The team made preliminary contacts and explored the possibilities for acquisition and transportation of arms for the NPC in order to counter its rivals in the Action Group. However, because the Sardauna never gave the executive order to procure the arms, nothing actually happened until the northern states were threatened with practical encroachment by the Biafran troops from its southern border with the Eastern Region. The six Military Governors of the Northern States (including my humble self) together with the Chairman of the Interim Common Services Agency, Colonel Hassan Usman Katsina, were the personalities on whom the responsibility of finding arms and armour to equip the federal troops under Colonel Shuwa rested. Not only did it become our absolute responsibility to recruit and train able bodied youths to join the army, but also to keep our population's morale high and committed to the cause of the impending civil war.

# Details of Arms Before Commencement of War

The Nigeria army even prior to the war, was neither numerically adequate, sufficiently equipped nor fully prepared to bear the pressure which the war imposed on it. Already the Igbo officers, who formed the bulk of the officer corps in the Nigerian Army, had withdrawn to the Biafran side. Both sides had no real Air Force. The Nigeria Air Force (NAF) had just been created. It was in its embryonic stage, possessing only a bare dozen of trainer aircraft of the Dornier type. The Rebels on the other hand, had two American built B-26 bombers purchased clandestinely from second-hand French markets. The Rebels also possessed a number of French-built helicopters originally bought for civil purposes by oil companies operating in the Eastern Region prior to the civil war. This enhanced Biafra's air strike capability as in raiding Air Force and aircraft bases in Kaduna, Makurdi and Kano: They also bombed oil installations like those in Escaravos, the oil terminal at Ogbigbe and also refineries and oil depots. The acquisition and role of the B-26 bombers though with insignificant destruction levels, was psychologically damaging to the Federal side. This impressed on the Federal side the paramount and strategic role of air power and other heavy weapons against the rebels

**Table 4: Values And Sources of Nigerias Arm's Purchase, 1963 - 1969**

(Value in Pound Sterling)

| YEAR | SOURCE | AMOUNT |
|---|---|---|
| 1963 | 1. U.K.<br>2. Others | 177,754<br>35,745 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Total | 213,499 |
| 1964 | 1. U.K. | 60,918 |
| | 2. Others | 106,173 |
| | Total | 167,091 |
| 1965 | 1. U.K. | 159,185 |
| | 2. Others | 276,667 |
| | Total | 203,557 |
| 1966 | 1. U.K. | 171,391 |
| | 2. Others | 186,835 |
| | Total | 368,226 |
| 1967 | 1. U.K. | 171,391 |
| | 2. Others | 186,835 |
| | Total | 368,226 |
| 1968 | 1. U.K. | 2,817,560 |
| | 2. Others | 740,540 |
| | Total | 3,558,100 |
| 1969 | 1. U.K. | 10,255,089 |
| | 2. Others | 277,947 |
| | Total | 10,533,636 |

## The Western State's Apathy Towards the Civil War

To make matters worse, we in the Northern states received another political shocker from the Western State in a public announcement by their leaders of thought under Chief Obafemi Awolowo to the effect that as far as the Western State was concerned, this war was basically and practically between the Northerners and the Easterners. That "if the East is allowed to secede, the Western State would secede from the Federation of Nigeria too". The signal to the Northern states was loud and clear. Chief Awolowo and his tribesmen had decided to stab us in the back (Yankan baya) in ironical appreciation of his release from Calabar prison, consequent upon the amnesty granted him by the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon. This behaviour not only

portrayed them as fair-weather friends, but also went ahead to confirm the age long belief in the fluid, unreliable trait and fickle-mindedness of the average Westerner, his high intellectual achievement and exposure notwithstanding. The ethnic weakness characteristic of West is inherent and therefore permanent. On receiving the Western State's declaration that the war was between Northerners and the Easterners, the northern Cabinet immediately met and after deliberations on the implication of Awolowo's implied and subtle encouragement for Biafra declared as follows:

*That the Northern States had noted Western State's neutrality in the impending civil war. But, the West should also note that, while the North respect their neutrality, nevertheless, had already declared a one-mile wide military corridor from Offa in the Northern States right down to Lagos lagoon in the Western States. The area is half (2) a mile on both sides of the railway line right down to Apapa wharf. By this declaration, any obstruction to free movement of the Northern war machine during the war would be taken as enemy action and would be met with destructive forces no matter the nature of such obstruction, be it in the form of any structure, machine or human. In other words, if it was necessary to demolish any existing buildings or structure in order to pave smooth passage for the Northern war machine, the North was totally committed to doing such without further reference.*

This information was conveyed to the leaders of the West with subtlety. Not in writing but passed from mouth to mouth through northern Yoruba speaking couriers and carried to the appropriate authority in the West. The effect of this message was that it stopped the Yoruba indifference and we never heard of the West's resistance to the war effort again. In fact, few months later, in early August, 1968 when

Ojukwu overran the Mid-west through the Ika-Igbo-conspiracy, and sent a brigade to conquer Lagos and another brigade to conquer and overrun Ibadan, we suddenly saw the Yorubas running helter-skelter and finally into federal arms. Alarm was clearly written on their faces and were openly saying, "So that was Ojukwu's real intention?" We thank Ojukwu for making the Western States realize that, it did not pay to hide your head and leave your buttocks exposed, like an ostrich. After all, there is no hiding place for the goldfish. Awolowo publicly charged the Yorubas to come out and deal with the rebels. It is imperative to note that the concept of this military corridor was not a temporary affair. It was intended to be a permanent feature, for all time, as a part of the defence system of the North. For the benefit of clarity, no responsible community or nation will remain without well-articulated defence mechanism. In this particular instance, the option for the northern states was either to maintain that corridor and keep it open against any obstacle or perish. But as Muslims and good Christians, we shall never commit suicide as this is the resort of godless people and of cowards. It is, indeed, others on the other side of the divide, who would commit suicide due to utter desperation.

In a nutshell, Ojukwu's quick thrust into the heart of Yorubaland changed (though almost belatedly) the erroneous belief that the war was between the Hausa North Awolowo and fence sitting Yoruba soldiers, had thought and the Igbo East. Yoruba leaders, including Chief Obafemi that Ojukwu's main concern was the liberation of his dream Biafra and would be satisfied with extricating the Eastern bloc from the rest of Nigeria.

Of course, the Northerners justifiably thanked Allah for that providential attack by the rebels on Yorubaland, for it was timely for the Yoruba reassessment of their position in the war. We in the North, knew that the inordinate ambition of Ojukwu and of course all Igbo was not only to take over the juicy lands of the North as their topmost priority, but to subsequently walk over the people of the west who they percieved as feeble. The real intention was to fight the North for all that it was worth and then leisurely take the West in the manner that knife cuts through butter.

On the other side of the coin, the North stands to repel any incursion into its land by not only the Igbo, but any indigenous groups for that matter, local of international. The North, will forever retain its military superiority over all its neighbours.

Let the Igbos read about the greatest campaign which the entire British colonial power waged in 1900-1907, before they could subdue Sokoto Caliphate at Mbormi in the present Gombe State. We the eighty million descendants of those martial race and brave captains, are still here in much larger numbers and better developed to carry similar struggle to any level and to timeless period on this earth! This is in total contrast to the mere walk over of the southern

As far as I know, I can assure all and sundry that the Northerners are not the kind of feeble and godless people that are prone to mass suicide in the face of any adversity. We have for long been toughened and tempered by swords of war and as such, an average Northerner prefers to die with his sword, or gun in hand, than to be slaughtered while sleeping in his house. Battlefields were the grounds on which our forefathers were raised and so will be their children and grandchildren till the end of the world, and our collective national interest does not start and end with the sea coast of southern Nigeria but extend beyond the continental and economic zones of our international waters.

## Men of Good Will

Any discussion on the socio-political development of the northern states in particular and the country as a whole, will not be complete without examining the role of the traditional institutions. When Ojukwu declared secession of the Eastern Region from the rest of Nigeria with the name of Biafra and thereby giving birth to civil war, the six northern states of the Federation were faced with a very serious problem of responding to the first onslaught of Biafra on our population. Mentioning "Six Northern States" (now over forty years after the civil war) might sound strange. Strange in the sense that "Federal government" ought to be the right expression. Because it Military Government, on the one hand, and the rebels on the was believed that the civil war was between the Federal other. That was the legal position. But the actual reality was that the Army Headquarters in Lagos, headed by Brigadie Ogundipe as the then Army Chief Staff and

his outfit, did not see it in that light not withstanding the fact that Col Yakubu Gowon was the Head of State and Commander-in Chief of the Armed Forces. The army high command was still secretly toying with the idea that the war was between the North and the East and they mischievously decided to cash in on Gowon's natural dovish attitude and disposition to peace and therefore refused to give order for the counter attack to repel the Biafran first attack. Instead, they deliberately kept on advising Gowon on dialogue with the rebels, hiding their real belief that the war was not theirs. This is buttressed by the fact that when Col. Mohammed Shuwa, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) One Division at the Makurdi front, was already at his post with his men, not a single fresh armour of war was sent to him. This situation went on for days and weeks with the Biafran army pushing our population up to Makurdi while Federal troops remained helplessly unarmed. At a stage, the leadership of the North. i.e. the Governors of the Northe states and the Chairman of the Interim Common Service, Colonel Hassan Usman Katsina, realized that unless we did something extraordinary, the rebels would soon win atleast , in psychological and moral terms especially with our teaming population running up North, when we had all the resources not only to defend ourselves but also to launch an effective counter attack. Therefore, as a result of one of our several meetings and contacts, we decided without Lagos knowing to involve our traditional institutions and elder statesmen like the late Emir of Gwandu, Alhaji Haruna Rasheed, the late Marafan Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmadu Dan Baba, the late Emir of Daura, Alhaji Muhammadu Bashar, a prince of Sokoto, in the person of Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki. (later Sultan of Sokoto) who was Chairman of the Northern States Marketing Board and select top former

government officials. Far reaching decisions and steps were immediately taken which resulted in drastically reversing our position in all fronts of the war. It was these men of culture who prevailed throughout the civil war till victory was achieved by our troops on 15th January 1970, which coincided with the date our political and military leaders were murdered in their sleep by a cowardly Igbo group in the army.

It is important to put on record here, for the benefit of the young ones who did not know, that there indeed was a crop of patriotic Northerners who played leading roles in ensuring that victory over a greedy, overambitious and cowardly Igbo military was won.

At this juncture, I must thank God for putting me in a good position to be of service to the people. I say this because we, that is myself as the Military Governor of the North-Western State and other Nigerians of goodwill who were dedicated to duty such as the late Alhaji Sani Kontagora, Ambassador to Niger, were the ones who directed the implementation of our decision. It was our initial success over the rebels that made Lagos to change it did not enter the war seriously until the rebels had over ran attitude towards the war. In fact, the Federal Government the Mid-western Region, in August 1967 and threatened their dear and precious Western and Lagos States, that Brigadier Ogundipe then realized that it was a war against the Federal Government. It was only when the Army Headquarters feared that the rebels would take over the resources in both the West and Lagos as they had done to the Mid-West, that they then released supplies to the Federal troops as well as opening up the new 'Two Division' front under the command of Col. Murtala

Muhammad to save mainly the West and Lagos. I am proud to state that I was one of the Chief Executives, who kept all records and daily war situation reports from all fronts of the 1 Division, every night from the beginning to the end of the war.

It is regrettable to state here that while we sought and obtained the services of eminent Nigerians like the late Emir of Gwandu Alhaji Haruna Rasheed, the Wamban Daura (later Sarki) Alhaji Muhammad Bashar, the Baraden Sokoto Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki and a host of other northem civilian leaders to win the initial victory, a section of those charged with keeping Nigeria one, only paid lip service to the corporate existence of the country. In the final analysis and ironically, it was this category of people that got all the decorations, the awards and medals of honour, for being the best assessed patriots. A case of *Monkey de work, Baboon dey chop?* May the soul of Alhaji Haruna Abdul Rasheed rest in perfect peace - Amin

One interest episode I always remember with nostalgia and which always reminds me of those good old days when leaders put the people first above their personal interest, was what transpired between the late Sultan Abubakar and one of his senior councilors. I could recall that, one day in the early hours, I sent a message to him informing him that the civil war had commenced. He summoned his very close cabinet members and passed on the Government message to them. Later, one senior councilor approached him and suggested that it was better to start making arrangement for alternative shelter to be found and prepared for him in the neighbouring Niger Republic. The Sultan told me that he angrily rebuked the councillor with a stern question as to whether there was no death in Niger

Republic. He reasoned that if he were to die in the cause of the civil war, the best place for him was there in the palace with his people. This was indeed the caliber of elders that I was privileged to work with.

**1. The Interim Administrative Council**

As a result of the creation of twelve states in the Federation following a series of agitations and consequent upon the outbreak of the civil war, the Federal Military Government set-up an Interim Administrative Council for the northern states in 1967. The composition of the council was given as follows:

1. Chairman: General Hassan Usman Katsina, Former Governor of the defunct Northern Region.

2. Secretary: Alhaji Ali Akilu, Former Head of the Civil Service, Northern Region.

3. All Permanent Secretaries of the defunct Northern Region.

4. All Secretaries of the Military Governments in the six newly created states.

5. The Administrator of Kaduna.

6. Head of the Army in Kaduna.

7. Head of the Air Force in Kaduna.

8. Head of the Police in Kaduna.

The functions of the Council were outlined as follows:

i. Arrangement for sharing of the assets and liabilities of the defunct regional government, among the six newly created states.

ii. Establishment of the machinery of government in the newly created states.

iii. Deployment to the state civil servants who were employed in the permanent service of the defunct Northern Region.

iv. Consideration of problems of general administration of the newly created states.

v. Consideration of matters included in any directive of the Head of the Federal Military Government addressed to the council.

vi. To be the legal successor of the former government.

The establishment of the council is of tremendous importance in the scheme of things, especially as it was to serve a dual purpose. That is, apart from the purpose for which it was created, it also became the Northern think-tank- which was to be the real brain for the execution of the war. The policy statement on states' creation and the subsequent decree backing it, gave very wide powers to the new body. In the typical unique northern mode of operation on matters of high security and sensitivity, the content of the circular was not made public, but passed on by word of mouth throughout the six northern states.

## Achievements of the Interim Administrative Council in the War

The Interim Administrative Council, as a think tank for the North made tremendous impact towards mobilizing the northern people for the civil war. It also assisted in securing arms and ammunitions from as far outside as China in order to defend and keep Nigeria one. There was also the effort of recruiting and training youths for the war. The Interim Administration also mobilized all our resources from Ministries, Provincial Headquarters, Divisions and Native Authorities and placed same to the use of our Armed Forces without let or hindrance. This drive included deployment of able-bodied young civil servants, newly converted native authority policemen and men of the Nigeria Police, as well as able bodied ex-service men (thousands who saw action in Burma, Cameroon and Ghana). As for logistics, all available government and native authority vehicles and other relevant facilities were laid at the disposal of the Federal troops. They also asserted that as we had no territorial ambition over the land of any ethnic group in Nigeria, so not one inch of the North will be taken by any ethnic group by force of arms.

To keep the propaganda of the war on course, the the Federation. The action was from its initial conception a cabinet launched the *"Troops Comfort Fund"* throughout purely propaganda and morale raising tactic. By the time the propaganda was well underway, millions of pounds were collected as donations to the war effort, thus achieving double victory. Similarly, the famous slogan, *"To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done"*, was coined to show that Biafrans were Nigerians, and not the

hunted people that they wanted the world to believe.

**Training Institutions**

The Interim Administrative Council, realized that the Northern states had the biggest facilities for training recruits and therefore wasted no time in filling all the depots, (both the army and police), with thousands of recruits, who were very eager to join up. In fact, the problem became, not where to get the recruits from, but how to reduce them into quota, because each state wanted H to field more than two hundred thousand. There was a time, at the height of the recruitment, that the six Northern states had a combined offer of recruitment of more than one million, two hundred thousand on the waiting list.

Vast depots existed in Zaria, Kaduna, Makurdi, Kano, Maiduguri, and Kachia, to name the major ones. The propaganda was highly successful. Young and old men enlisted in the army in response to the call to defend their fatherland. They came in droves singing patriotic songs of war-all men who showed that they were the true sons of vouth wishing to join the army was put at more than five their fathers. In fact an estimated number of eager northern million (5) at any given time even if the war would last for more than ten years.

**Acquistion of Arms and Ammunition by the North**

With such an encouraging response from the northern youths, the elders, the rich and the traditional rulers, it took us little time to make an important surmise about Biafra's ultimate intention not really

being to secede from Nigeria, but to take over and overrun the North first, then the Western state and finally, for the domination of Nigeria as a whole. In a way, it was to be a fulfillment of General Ironsi's vision in the infamous Decree No. 34 of 1966, which abolished the Regions and ushered in the Unitary Government in Nigeria, so that the Igbos could have a chance of achieving their age-long ambition of the domination of Nigeria.

Having reached this stage of commitment, the Northern think-tank was confronted with the stark reality of lack of arms to equip even one battalion. Ironically, the same dilemma that was laid before the Sardauna in 1965, bounced back before his successors-his scions, the six military governors of the northern states. However, with the help of God, His wisdom and mercy, the think-tank somehow at last remembered the delegates the late Sardauna had sent out two years earlier to friendly countries and to friends of his. Within a short time, the members were quickly re-assembled and after a thorough discussion and evaluation of their last mission's brief, were sent back to the same destination. This time they went with political father had just been murdered by the same enemy. a fresh brief. in the name of Northern Nigeria, whose who was still threatening to take away the whole land.

The special delegation comprised Alhaji Ali Akilu, who was the Secretary to the Premier, the Wamban Daura (later the Emir) Alhaji Muhammad Bashar and Brigadier Wali by the grace of ALLAH, both Akilu and Wamban Daura, were leaders of the same fact-finding mission in 1965. While the secret team was away, I as the Military Governor of the North-Western state was naturally co-opted. As a mark of our total commitment to winning the war and saving the North,

I could testify on the Qur'an, that I could not recall any of the officials, be they military or civilians, who handled this massive transaction of arms worth millions of dollars, who illegally or fraudulently benefited even one kobo directly from the deals. In fact, at the end of the war, we abandoned more than twenty-four trailers to those foreigners who worked with us on the other side of the many borders. I have a list of the dedicated Nigerians who were guided by the sense of patriotism to the core. People like late Alhaji Ali Akilu, former Secretary to the late Premier of the North, late Wamban Daura, Alhaji Mamman Bashar, Brigadier Wali, Ambassador Sani Kontagora, Captain Muhammadu Halidu (later Lt. General and Minister of Industry), Brigadier Audu Shinga, the Brigade Commander Sokoto Units, Col. Aslope, Brigade Commander Sokoto, Alhaji Bappa Jama'are, my ADC (later Assistant Inspector General of Police, and Late Alhaji Muhammadu Isa Wasagu my Principal Secretary (later Deputy Governor Kebbi State)

## The Role of President Hammani Diori of Niger Republic

While the sustained effort was being made to get the arms matters going, we lost no time in securing the necessary diplomatic initiative from the countries involved. In fact, we believed two issues must naturally go hand in hand. We worked very hard to convince leading members of each government to assist us to fight the wicked propaganda against Nigeria. The foremost president working for the interest of Nigeria was of course the late Hammani Diori of Niger Republic and his delectable wife, Hajiya Aisha Diori. The iron lady, whom we came to regard as godmother, was a constant visitor to

Sokoto Government House. She was also a self appointed Ambassador of Nigeria to all Francophone countries, as well as to France where she exerted an extraordinary influence on leading French politicians. The good lady left no stone unturned in her effort to campaign for Nigeria abroad, with her enormous influence and personal resources. Of all the African countries, especially our immediate neighbors, Niger Republic was the best diplomatic ally Nigeria ever had.

The subject of the intensive negotiation involving Her Excellency, Lady Aisha Hammani Diori and quite a number of friends among the staff and Government of Niger Republic under Haji Hammani Diori was the dangerous task of while we provided the up front payment. The deal finally Sourcing arms of all descriptions from Europe on our behalf while we provided the up front payment. The deal finally resulted in the purchase and transportation of assorted arms and armour from the Mediterranean sea ports and over the desert, first to Niger Republic and then on to Sokoto where my team and I took over and moved the war machines to various fronts through One Division, Nigeria Army. To execute the onerous task, Nigeria had to purchase and put into use not less than twelve heavy trucks especially built for the cross-desert transportation to Nigeria. They arrived and were delivered to the military units of One Division. It was this that enabled them to push and break through to Obudu, Calabar and to the famous Mile Nine corner near Enugu. President Hammani Diori's rare courage and dedication to help his brothers in Northern Nigeria against stiff opposition from his former colonial masters- the French, proved that indeed blood is thicker than water. It is on record that partly because of his role in going against the powerful French interest,

President Hammani was deposed by military coup in 1974 through the instrumentality of the French Government as a revenge for openly helping Nigeria despite a defence agreement with France signed on independence in 1960.

It was one of the biggest success stories of arms acquisition by Northerners in their quest and desire to save their region and religion from the devil and Juju worshipers from the Eastern enclave known as Biafra. I shall forever remain grateful to ALLAH for including me as part of a rewarding destiny in playing the role of saving our country and people. Even the heavy trucks which we bought to bring in the machines to Nigeria, were subsequently handed over to their operators free of charge.

# CHAPTER TEN

## Foreign Interests: True and Fair Weather Friends

Foreigners were in the full picture of what triggered the war as evidenced by the events of the 29th July 1966, even as the issue went out to as far as Ghana as discussed elsewhere in this book. The major powers led by the British, the former colonial masters, saw the looming civil war totally against their investment in oil and industries located in Biafra and under the control of Biafran authority. This situation was different from the position of France, the United States and a host of others who stood to gain commercially with this new scenario. The Western powers without exception found themselves in a fix for the following reasons:

i. The Nigerian oil fields were located in the East while the Headquarters of all the companies were located in Lagos under the control of the Federal Military Government.

ii. Both the Federal Military Government and the Eastern Nigerian Government desperately needed diplomatic positions to maintain their supply from foreign governments uninterrupted. But the rebel cabal, apart from the supply of arms also badly needed diplomatic recognition.

iv. Furthermore, it was reliably learnt that Ojukwu had already mortgaged most of the oil concessions, especially to France in return for supply of arms and diplomatic support of both the latter and the

Francophone countries surrounding Nigeria

iv. Most of the Francophone countries received and exported their essential commodities through Nigerian Ports, including bottled water. This means 90% of French trading with their colonies depended on a peaceful Nigeria.

V. The fundamental policy of all European powers were framed, nurtured and sustained totally in the interest of Europe. Not even 1% of it could be traced to the interests of their former colonies.

The implication of these five points was that the combined interest of the majority of the foreign countries was to maintain mild neutrality in their relations with Nigeria on the one hand and with the rebelling East on the other in a spurious policy of balance. That is why France in particular was the leading supporter of Biafra even after the fall of the oil producing areas to the Federal Government. Both the U.K. and France devised dubious means of sustaining Biafra through the use of discredited international organizations such as the Red Cross and numerous others engaged in gun running while at the same time talking with both belligerent sides.

However, while pursuing the so-called European Policy of even handedness, they were secretly bent on breaking Nigeria into smaller states, similar to those of some Francophone countries. This was so that the smaller states, would not pose any threat to their enormous interests in our neighbourhoods whose populations had been so brain washed by French policy, which demanded that even drinking water had to be imported from Paris in the form of bottled water. All this was in addition to its iron grip on Biafran oil which was mortgaged to France in return for arms. Most of the weapons Biafra got were

through Paris, including their greatest war machine, the notorious B.26 fighter-bombers. There were also hundreds of other sophisticated weapons and mercenaries which they obtained through active and open support of France who even used its former African colonies to deny Nigeria any diplomatic support. France aided and permitted recruitment of European and African mercenaries and their safe passage to all African countries surrounding Nigeria with the exception of Niger Republic, and to a lesser extent, Cameroon.

The same, but more dubious roles, were played by our fair weather ally, the United Kingdom. While France's influence was having a telling effect on the Nigerian side of the war, Britain and their friend the U.S, simply pretended as if nothing serious was happening to Nigeria, only maintaining the pre-war commitment to normal weapons already on order by the Nigerian Government. In fact, they did not do anything to assist Nigeria in reversing the devastating effect of the Biafra's B.26 acquisition but instead, only used their influence to prevent supply of air power to both sides when knowing fully well that Biafra already had the upper hand.

## Enter the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union, despite the re-building and harnessing of its world position, plus the fact that she had only a superficial contact and interest in Africa generally, nevertheless came to Nigeria's assistance (1969-1970) even though with no clear prospects of reaping economically, socially and militarily. Whatever the motive the Soviet Union had in coming to the aid of Nigeria at that very crucial

period of Nigeria's existence, it would forever remain evergreen in the memory of Nigerian leaders and the entire Nigerian population. We, the prosecutors of the Nigerian civil war, were overwhelmed with joy and happiness, especially when the source of such national joy came out of the blue in form of fire arms and Russian combat Mig Fighters. This assisted the country in redeeming her self esteem while her so-called friends, the United Kingdom and U.S.A, continued to claim neutrality in the conflict.

The position of Britain and the U.S. continued to be a puzzle to me, because the two countries had monumental economic and political interests in Nigeria which they could protect quite legitimately as against pursuing an illegitimate adventure by giving the Biafran dream a subtle support. Except of course they, like France, are in tacit support of the balkanization of the country so that they would share from the spoils of the division. Nevertheless, it remains a shame that what they denied Nigeria in the name of fire arms and air power, Nigeria got from the Russians who, as I said, were only just testing a possible relationship with Nigeria and Africa. It is even more shameful considering the long historical relationship between Nigeria and Britain.

It must yet be emphasized that the civil war in Nigeria, marked for the first time a significant military involvement by USSR in a sub-saharan conflict situation and during the thirty months war, Nigeria proved to be the foremost recipient of Soviet weapons in the whole of black Africa, courtesy of the military situation in the country. The table below, an extract from many sources, represents the register of known weapons to have

been shipped to Nigeria by the USSR or its allies during the war. Some weapons were supplied through some North African countries, notably Egypt and Algeria. The table shows weapon category and quantities supplied by the USSR during the war and shipment of Soviet Weapons to the Nigerian side during the civil war.

| YEAR | Weapon System And Quantity | Country of Origin |
|---|---|---|
| 1967 | 1O MIG 173<br>12 15L 29 Delfin Trainers<br>6 MIG 15 UTI<br>5 Torpedo Boats<br>Bombs,ammunitions and small arms | USSR/Czechoslovakia<br>Czeschoslovakia<br>Poland<br>USSR<br>USSR |
| 1968 | 4 Ilyushin 28 Bombers<br>31 MIG 173<br>Approximately 80 Jeeps and Command cars<br>Small arms | USSR, Algeria and Egypt<br>USSR, Algeria and Egypt<br>USSR<br>USSR<br>USSR |
| 1969 | 1 Ilyushin 28 Bomber<br>122mm Howitzers<br>4 5 BU 75<br>2 MIG 193<br>Small arms | USSR<br>USSR<br>USSR/Egypt<br>USSR/Egypt<br>USSR |

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## Inside ″Biafra″

I have said that it must be conceded to Ojukwu that he could always sway his audience with a rare gift of demagoguery. He used his power of propaganda to deceive all the gullible people of the world that it was in-deed Biafra that was being hunted and persecuted by an inhuman Federal Government of Nigeria. Ojukwu, rather than show contrition, hardened his position. In fact from the beginning of October 1966, when he ordered that all Igbos living in the other regions, especially the North should return home, he started actualizing the Igbo agenda. He proclaimed that he was not safe any where in Nigeria except the East hence his boycott of many conferences and meetings he was invited to attend. By January of 1967 after the Aburi peace talks, it became clearer to him that the soft spoken Yakubu Gowon was not a moron after all and was capable of checkmating his (Ojukwu's) own sophistry to actualize his agenda.

In April, when Gowon sent a word of warning to Ojukwu and the generality of the belligerent East, it became clearer that Gowon was going to show his cerebral superiority which other people had misconstrued as weakness, especially when exhibited without fanfare. In late April, Gowon had declared:

*You will agree that the country cannot continue in its present state of uncertainty...I want to make it abundantly clear that in the event of Lt. Col Ojukwu carrying out his threat to secede, this will be a*

*clear signal in the first place to create a COR-state for the protection of minorities in Eastern Nigeria whom we know do not want to part from the rest of the country. This action will be backed by the use of force if need be.*

The true meaning of this was not lost on Ojukwu and his think tank, and so the need to start an internal propaganda to sell his idea to non-Igbo Easterners. He needed very badly to carry along the non-Igbo groups who have for long over-lordship. suffered under the yoke of Igbo overlordship

The Igbos had moved to the riverine areas initially to trade and eventually majority had settled there amongst the Ijaw, Kalabari, Okrika, Ogoni, Ikwere, Ibibio, Efik, Ogoja, Annang etc. This was in the early 40's. Because of the advantage of number and true to their well-known expansionist tendencies, the Igbo settlers started to dominate especially as Igbo, the language, was gradually becoming the lingua franca. As time went on, proper Igbo and its pidgin variety became widely used among the populace especially as Igbo, as a language, was officially taught in schools. This began the cultural imposition, which the native tribes of the riverine areas did not realize until the 50's when cultural/political groups sprang up and privileges were shared according to the strengths of each group. The big tribes were able to fight for their fair share of resources, but the smaller ones had to protest before even a pittance was considered for them. In fact, it became fashionable for members of the small ethnic groups to claim indigeneship of the bigger ones in order to court favours. They had to

change their names to Igbo names.The Igbos, being the largest single tribe in the whole of the Southeast exploited this to their advantage. They cornered all the plush jobs and privileges and even extended their political influence into the areas that was later known as the Mid West and much later still Bendel state. The Igbo tribal group was firmly in control of the area just as the Hausa/Fulani was in the North and the Yoruba in the west.

Meanwhile, in the fifties the wind of self-determination was blowing very swiftly and the people of the riverine areas were now poised to claim what was theirs. To the chagrin of the Igbos who could be found in all the divisional headquarters in good numbers, the natives decided that they wanted the COR states; the Cross River, Ogoja and Rivers States. The demand for these states by the good people of those areas represented to the Igbo a setback to their original agenda. A break up of the area into different politically independent groups will put an end to the original idea of an Igbo empire and an Igbo emperor. Of course, all forms of sophistry were employed by the Igbo to dissuade protagonists of the new states from actualizing their freedom.

On the other hand, Chief Dappa Biriye and others wanted nothing less than total freedom from the Igbos whose dominance they had tolerated till then. They maintained that they had suffered enough deprivations and therefore wanted self-determination. They wanted their own states so that relationships with people of other nationalities would then be on equal basis, so that future coexistence would be dictated by equitable representation on both sides. At the critical moment when tension was mounting, resulting from the two coups of 1966, Ojukwu had to

devise a method of ensuring an eastern solidarity without giving non-Igbos of the East their freedom. But at this period also, the minority tribes saw the opportunity to claim their nationhood. They wanted their states. No more, no less.

For being adamant on this very legitimate demand, they were termed "saboteurs". They were variously accused of sabotaging the effort to actualize the dream of the Igbo oligarchy. Their fears were confirmed just after the declaration of Biafra. Most of their leaders were put in detention, their properties seized and their lands confiscated. This also provided an opportunity for those who had personal scores to settle. They used the opportunity to deal with their opponents or enemies. The people now became slaves in their own country. Arrests were made on a daily basis so much so that the minority wanted NIGERIA very badly.

Biafra never really lived before it died, because once the initial effect of Ojukwu's propaganda started to fizzle out, the reality on the ground became too intimidating. How did he hope to carry along other ethnic groups in the area in the event of war? Granted that Igbo youths had responded to Ojukwu's call to war, but was the war going to be fought by the Igbos alone? The reality was that the non-Igbos of the eastern region considered Ojukwu's actions as over ambitious. If he wanted an empire, why not have one without dragging in other non-Igbo nationalities? Why must the new Rivers and Cross River states be part of his plans? The answer is simple. The two states are the custodians of Nigeria's oil wells-the oil wells that would finance

and sustain Ojukwu's dream empire. The real fact is that there wouldn't have been a dream of an empire, if there wasn't the prospect of oil. It's as simple as that!

Why should Ojukwu allow his over-ambition to make him invade the Mid West? The answer to this is also simple The Mid west must not be allowed to be part of Nigeria again, especially after the first civilian government of the region had been headed by an Igbo man-Chief Dennis Osadebey. The Midwest also had its oil wells and must therefore be part of the Igbo dream empire.

Why should Ojukwu declare war on Nigeria? It must be stated that Nigeria never declared war on Ojukwu or the East; Ojukwu declared war on his fatherland. So why? All the defence chiefs were Christians and Southerners. All but four of the Military Governors were Christians. What then was Ojukwu's grouse with the rest of Nigeria? Both Ojukwu and Gowon spoke at the initial stages of the war:

## Ojukwu's Speech

*In spite of initial handicaps, our brave and gallant forces on land, air and sea, have not only held their own but are giving the enemy*

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*exactly what they deserve. The initiative has now passed permanently into our hands. The daily toll on enemy lives has been heavy and sometimes staggering. That the enemy has not called off aggression in the*

*face of their heavy losses in human lives is another evidence of their utter disregard for those lives. Our sympathy goes to those unfortunate wives, the innocent and common people of western Nigeria and Lagos, whose children are daily lured to destruction in war which they neither understand nor have faith in. We have destroyed the enemy in Bonny and liberated that ancient and historic island. The remnants of the enemy in the Enugu sector are being systematically destroyed. The same is true of the Nkalagu sector. In the Ogoja sector our advances and successes have been steady and consistent. In the Calabar sector, the enemy is being starved to death. We are a peaceful people. We love and cherish peace and would like to see an end to this conflict with all its loss and destruction. But the initiative for ending this war must come from those who unleashed it. Let those who started the war stop it. Born out of the gruesome murders and vandalism of yesterday, Biafra has come to stay as a historic reality".*

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## GOWONS SPEECH

*I congratulate you, members of the armed forces and the police, for the magnificent discipline which you have shown so far. You must continue to conduct yourselves strictly according to your code of conduct and oaths as soldiers. The great cause for which we are fighting demands this of all of us. The objectives of the current operations to crush the*

*rebellion of Ojukwu and those whom he has blackmailed and misled are:*

*First, that the territorial integrity of this promising country is preserved for now and for posterity....Second that we ensure the equality of each and every ethnic group in this country, and equal status and opportunity for all our citizens....Third, that we establish and strengthen the new administrative structure so that no state can dominate the country.... Fourth, to create the internal conditions of stability and freedom of movement of persons and goods necessary for the most rapid economic and social development of the country; and*

*....Fifth, to win the respect of the outside world for ourselves and for the African and his ability to order his own affairs.*

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*These are the great goals for which we are fighting. Our detractors have tried to confuse the issues. Some of them have suggested that we are fighting a religious war- a war of "Federal Moslems" against "Christian rebel". This is nonsense. The entire world should know by now that more than sixty percent of the officers and men of the Nigerian Armed Forces are Christians and not Moslems....Let the malicious propaganda amongst our detractors cease. Let the rebels stop pushing innocent Igbo Youths and others in their thousands to a senseless and untimely death. I and my Government guarantee the Ibos a future of absolute equality with all the other ethnic groups in this country....We must have the conditions for lasting peace. This is why*

*Federal Military Government reiterates its conditions for the cessation of military operations.*

*First, the rebels must renounce secession....Second, the rebel regime must accept the present administrative structure of a Federal Union of Nigeria comprising twelve states....Third, a body of men must come forward from the East Central State willing to work for national reconciliation, peace and reconstruction...*

Meanwhile, Ojukwu could not be persuaded to stop the meaningless war. Majority of the eastern civilians were the worst for it. People were running from one town to another to either avoid being picked up by Biafra vigilantes or become victims of the Federal bullets, as the campaign of "crush Ojukwu's rebellion" had become a full military operation. Food was becoming increasingly scarce and money was in short supply. People living in the hinterlands at least had their farms to fall back on but for how long? As the senseless defiance of Federal Authority continued, Federal soldiers kept pushing in to capture Ojukwu and his collaborators and so even the farmlands became unsafe. In 1968, at the height of the belligerence, the Federal Government of Nigeria had not only changed its currency but had also tactically caused a blockade of supplies to the East. The result was catastrophic and the eastern population who wanted a stop to the whole madness became the scapegoats. People in this category were either outrightly killed or thrown into jails to face serious interrogations and tortures.

By now, the new propaganda song was GENOCIDE. Ojukwu claimed that the Federal Government of Nigeria was perpetrating GENOCIDE on Easterners. If the eastern population was no more convinced, some African countries believed him. Between April and May of

1968, four African countries-Tanzania, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Zambia had recognized Biafra and by implication, helped in prolonging the hostilities and suffering of the innocent citizens of Eastern Nigeria.

Outside Africa, USA and France showed considerable support to the rebels by providing arms and other materials. France started by converting Red Cross planes into arms and relief materials transport. One report says this about the USA and others:

## War Reports From Inside Biafran Enclave U.S.A

The U.S. had been distressed by Biafra's plight but it wanted to see Nigeria survive as a unified nation, so Washington's relief had been channeled through private and religious organizations. But later, Washington's attitude altered. Alarmed by the possibility of a vast famine that could kill thousands of Biafra's 12,000,000 people in that year, the administration had decided on a more active role, one that would funnel $20 million more in relief into Biafra by the end of that fiscal year.

While U.S. officials insisted that offer of the planes did not constitute a major change in policy, the move seemed certain to increase U.S. pressure on the warring sides for a peaceful settlement. It would also be a spur to other nations to contribute

more relief and reduce arms shipments to Nigeria and Biafra. The new U.S. initiative is based on the projection that, if mass famine was to be averted, Biafra should be receiving 40,000 to 50,000 tons of food a month. Only an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 tons now reach the territory via a clandestine nighttime airlift sponsored by relief organizations. There were unmarked planes for all to see: four DC-45, three DC-35 and a single constellation parked on the palm lined seaside tarmac. Patient research shows that the aircrafts have varied registration: French, German, Belgian, Zambian and Gabonese.

Apart from these active international participants, those who also helped to prolong the madness were mercenaries. Some of them thought they were doing good service to Africa by heeding Ojukwu's propaganda. They outrightly turned a deaf ear to the more sensible argument of the Federal Government which was telling the world that Ojukwu was an adventurer and liar whose only concern at the time was the ownership of the gushing oil wells of the people of Nigeria. That Ojukwu was deliberately endangering the lives of millions of non-Igbo living in the East of Nigeria. That separate states had been created for these people who were being prevented from enjoying their political freedom by Ojukwu's madness of a dream. The worst offenders in this category of mercenaries were German, Swedish and Irish warmongers.

**Rene Faulques:**

Biafra spent enormous sums to support arms supply airlift. It also hired pilots and soldiers, among them the well-known ground mercenary, Colonel Rene Faulques. But Faulques and his fellows soon backed out, claiming that Biafra lacked the equipment needed to train and arm its troops.

**Rolf Steiner:**

Biafra relied in the end on the German mercenary Rolf Steiner, an expert in adversity. As a boy of 15, he had fought in the Volkssturm home guard during the collapse of Hitler's Germany. In 1954, he was one of the doomed defenders of the French Foreign Legion garrison at Dienbienphu in Vietnam. In 1956 he was with the French forces that parachuted into Suez when Britain, France and Israel attempted unsuccessfully to wrest the canal from Egyptian control. In 1961 he was one of the legionnaires in Algeria who joined the abortive Generals' rebellion against French President Charles de Gaulle. In Biafra Steiner led some 7,000 Biafran soldiers in a valiant but eventually doomed unit, the Fourth Command Brigade.

**Major Taffy:**

Steiner's mercenary officers were a mixed lot, united only by loyalty to their Commander, distinguished only by their combat experience and their foibles. Major Taffy, Welsh and a veteran of the Fifth Command Mercenaries of the Congo, thought he was bullet proof. So did the Federals, who had reported him dead at least five times.

**Captain Paddy:**

Captain Paddy, an Irishman who had spent 22 of his 54 years in Africa, was the Unit's master mechanic. Just before Port-Harcourt fell to the Federals, he scrounged up a convoy of trucks and liberated under fire the entire workshop of the Shell B.P. refinery there.

**Captain Alec:**

Captain Alec, a one time British paratrooper used to walk around with a Madsen submachine gun, an FN rifle and a shotgun. He was wounded four times in six days before he left Biafra.

**Johnny Brown:**

Biafra obtained through international arms dealers, two B-26 bombers, one B-25 bomber, 12 T-6 Texans armed single engine prop trainers and eight Alomette helicopters. Biafran pilots flew the Texans and the helicopters, but to fly one of the B-26's, the rebels hired Johnny "Kamikaze" Brown. Brown's real name was Jean Zumbach. A Pole, Zumbach was a veteran of The Polish Air Force's brief stand against the Luftwaffe at the beginning of World War II.

**The Four Mercenaries:**

Also flying for the Biafra cause were four white mercenaries who came to a bad end during a mysterious impromptu bombing mission. According to one version of the story, the mercenaries decided in the pre-dawn hours of October 7, 1967 to end the Biafran War with one quick stroke, by bombing the headquarters of the Nigerian High Command in the capital city of Lagos. They stocked up with adequate fuel for the aircraft and for themselves into their FOKKER F-27 air liner, which had been hijacked from Nigeria. They also put aboard some make shift bombs and took off for Lagos. Their plan seems to have

been to roll a few barrel bombs out of the open door while banking the Fokker over selected diplomatic establishments on their way to High Command Headquarters. In any case, they were zooming in over the roof tops of Lagos' most heavily defended diplomatic enclave when antiaircraft guns opened up. The Fokker blew apart in mid-air, killing everyone on board.

**Hank Warton:**

Gunrunning south of the Sahara was big business in the eventful 1960's. In their efforts to influence African affairs, both Communist and Western Governments became involved in secret arms deals carried out by private entrepreneurs. The stakes were high and the risks were hair rising. But some pilots were willing to take their chances in order to meet payments on cargo aircraft that they were purchasing. The risks were worthwhile. For just a few hours in the air with a load of machine guns, a pilot with his own plane could take in about $20,000.00. Hank Warton was typical of this daring breed. A six foot tall American citizen who listed his residence as Miami, Florida, he readily agreed to fly Favier's goods to Port-Harcourt in south eastern Nigeria, the main port of Biafra. In consequence, he indeed carried the horrible cargo on behalf of the rebels, and international conspirators.

**Count Rosen:**

Von Rosen was a Swedish nobleman with a passion for airplanes and a penchant for under dogs. After flying supplies for United Nations troops during the Congo War, Count Carl Gustavr Von Rosen had returned to Sweden and taken up his more settled life as a senior pilot for Transair, vowing that he could

never again become involved in the squabbles of new African states. But he could not help being angered by the tales of slaughter and starvation in Biafra. In early August 1968, he got an opportunity to turn anger into action. A German branch of Caritas, the International Catholic Relief Organization, approached Transair and asked about chartering a plane to fly food and medicine for the beleaguered Biafrans. These mercenaries and their allies caused tremendous havoc to our interest initially. But as the time progressed, the Federal might gradually had a crippling effect on their efforts.

# CHAPTER TWELVE

## The Brave Captains of the War

The combined efforts of mercenaries, countries sympathetic to the Biafra cause and Ojukwu's own powerful propaganda were the real challenges to the Federal Authorities. The Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon wanted to do a quick operation to bring the hostility to a quick end, but this was hampered by the support the rebels received from outside. However, credit must be given to those gallant officers of the Nigerian Army who counter struck in order to beat Ojukwu back to his own domain after the initial flash attack on and capture of the Mid West by the rebels. The following officers wrote their names in gold for fighting the war to keep Nigeria one.

### Col. (Later General) Murtala Muhammad:

A soldier to the core, decisive, brave and ever forward looking. Murtala is always remembered as the saviour of the West and liberator of the Mid-West, which was seized early in 1967 by the rebels. His bold attempts at the impossible, gave other commanders the necessary bolster to engage the fighting machine and men of Biafra. As Divisional Commander, Murtala Muhammad led his men into the thick of hostilities early in 1968 when he crossed the River Niger at Idah with the men of 6 Brigade led by Captain Shehu Yar'adua and captured Onitsha

in March of 1968, though after a very tough and bloody battle. The liberation of Onitsha, consolidated Federal occupation of the Mid-West. His brave and soldierly character has been advanced by many analysts of the civil war as the primary psychological tonic for the Nigerian fighting men to continue to believe in themselves as potential victors even against the powerful rebel propaganda machine. It has been said that Ojukwu himself feared nobody but Murtala Muhammad, both in personal and official capacities. He later became a General, Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

## Major (Later Lt. General) Gibson Jallo:

When the 2nd Division of the Army was badly bruised in action, this ambitious officer led the 6th Battalion of the LGO to strengthen the Division in the Mid-West. The forthright officer was also charged with the command of the 2nd Division taking over from Col. I. B. M. Haruna at the height of hostilities in May 1969.

## Col. (Later Maj. General) Iliya Bisalla:

Steadfast soldier committed to the total liberation of the rebel enclave, he took over the command of the First Division from Col. Shuwa and continued the good work of the fighting machine.

## Captain (Later Major-General) Shehu Musa Yar'adua:

Young and adventurous soldier saw action in many fronts. He was commander of the 6th Brigade when the Federal troops under Col. Murtala Muhammad captured Onitsha. This gallant soldier was also part of the tactical command and commander of one company that started operations against the enemy in Bonny through Escravos- the amphibious sector of the war.

## Col. (Later Major-General) Ibrahim Haruna:

He took over the command of the 2nd Division from Murtala Muhammad. Tall and understanding, he was one war commander who had to carry along a badly bruised command for some time during the war, especially after the final capture of Onitsha. Notwithstanding the low morale of his men, he made bold moves into the Igbo heartland.

## Major (Later Col.) Anthony Ochefu:

Tall, intelligent, fearless and ambitious officer who was in the initial plans to clear the riverine areas of the embattled Mid-west through his involvement with the 31st and 32nd Battalions. He also saw action in Calabar. As Commander of the 3rd Battalion, in Escravos, he was charged with the responsibility of securing all riverine approaches to the Mid-west. He later commanded the 31st and 32nd Battalions to clear the Warri sector. It was his battalions that started the capture of Calabar

in October 1968 after a long but fruitless counter action from the rebel army.

## Col. (Later Major-General) Mohammed Shuwa:

He was one of the best commanders of the Nigerian Army. He commanded the 1st Division from the beginning of the war. He was an exceptionally good commander, loyal and obedient. This disciplined commander really infused discipline into the soldiers and that was why his Division became a real bulwark of the Nigerian Army throughout the civil war. Col. Shuwa was a textbook commander who paid meticulous attention to his operations and believed in effectively controlling a captured area before moving on.

## General Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo:

The Famous 3rd Marine Commandos commander, an engineer by training and after serving in elite formations, he was eventually appointed to take over from Colonel Adekunle as the commander of the 3rd Marine Commandos based at Port-Harcourt. He was bold, intelligent and knew how to work out his steps in any form of mine fields of the civil war. General Obasanjo was so effective and far-sighted that the envious records of steering the link up with the first and second divisions that helped in bringing the war to an end, could largely be credited to him. In fact, he literally 'smoked Col. Ojukwu out of the Biafran enclave in a way that Ojukwu had no alternative other than committing suicide. But since Igbos are not made to voluntarily die where there is some money around to grab, Ojukwu chose the less

hazardous option of fleeing, so that he could live to scoop the nice goodies of life. Obasanjo was responsible for bringing the war to an end and he informally received the instruments of surrender on behalf of the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon.

## Brigadier Benjamin Adesanya Adekunle:

The 1st commander of the 3rd Marine Commandos. At the time of the war that Col. Adekunle landed at Port-Harcourt, the situation was so serious that nobody in the Army headquarters believed, that he could storm Port-Harcourt ports and gain grounds. Thank God, this officer performed the rare feat. The commander, during his time, was the most popular and charismatic officer of the time. His influence spread like bush fire and this more than anything else enabled him to drive away the rebels from real and most important stronghold, at the sea front. Friends, Nigerians and foreigners credited him with some super natural powers which they believed propelled him to success against very formidable rebel defences and in their own so called part of Biafra.

## Col. (Later Major-General) Martin Adamu:

Young and ambitious officer who is easily remembered as one of the sector commanders to lead the war to crush Ojukwu's rebellion.

## Major (Later Col.) Sule Apollo:

Fearless and adventurous soldier whose name was synonymous with the initial campaign to take the war into the rebel territory and capture the rebels.

## Major (Later Lt. General) T. Y. Danjuma:

This fearless and humble soldier had proved his worth in the skirmishes before the war. That he did excellently as 2nd in command to a Divisional Commander was as a result of his total commitment to the task of keeping Nigeria one.

**Other Valiant Soldiers of Northern Origin** Who Contributed in Varying Degrees in the Action to Crush Ojukwu's Rebellion Include:

Major Emmanuel Abisoye, Major Sani Bello, Major Domkat Bali, Major David Jemibewon, Sgt. Major Adamu Pankshin, Major Titus Numan, Major Zamani Lekwot, Major Yisa Doko, Major Usman Jibrin, Major John Atom Kpera, Major Sabo Sokoto, Major Malumfashi, Major Bala, Major A.T. Hamman, Major Muhammadu Buhari*, Major Ibrahim Babangida*, Major Sani Abacha*, Major Abdulsalam Abubakar*. Major Mamman Vatsa, Major Garba Duba, Major Mamman Jega, Major Gado Nasko, Major Joshua Dogon Yaro, Major Anthony Hannaniya, Major Haladu, Col. Shittu Alao, Lt. Bagudu Mamman, Capt. Remawa, Lt. Col. Shande, Lt. Col. Inuwa Wushishi, Lt. Col. Ignatius Obeya, Capt. Sani Sami,

Capt. Ejiga, Capt. Joradan, Capt. Patrick Idoko, Capt. Atama, Capt. Y.Y. Kure, Major Ahmadu Aliyu, Major Gagara, Major Abdullahi Shelleng, Major Tense, Major Way, Private Abdullahi of 105 Battalion, 3rd Division. *(They later became Military Heads of State at different periods of their career).

Other soldiers of non-northern origin who performed well in the whole exercise to crush the rebellion include: Col. Benjamin Adekunle who led the 3rd Marine Commando, Col. Olusegun Obasanjo who took over the command from him and who brought the war to an end and received the instrument of surrender and Major Samuel Ogbemudia, who held out in the recapture of the Mid West from the rebel forces. Others are Col. J. J. Oluleye, Lt. Col. Alabi Isama, Lt. Col. George Innih, Lt. Col. Alani Akinrinade, Col. Ayo Ariyo, Col. Alfred Aduloju, Col. Sotomi, Commander Nelson Soroh, Major Godwin Ally, Major Tuoyo, Major Ola Oni, Major Tumoye, Major Yemi Alabi, Major Eromobor, Major Afeigbe, Lt. Col. Francis Aisida, Lt. Col. Utuk, Capt. Mac Semede, Lt. Awodeyi, Lt. Adadevo and Lt. Iluyomade.

By mid 1969, most of Eastern Nigeria had been liberated by the Federal troops and Ojukwu's frantic cry was now that of a cornered animal. A sensible tactician would have capitulated, at least to save the millions of people who were suffering as a result of his obstinacy and inordinate ambition to rule over a wealthy oil state in Africa south of the Sahara. Reports by international observers and chronicles paint a sorry picture of a people battered and pushed to the edge of a precipice by a leader blinded by sheer greed and inordinacy.

The Heroes-Fearless Fighting
COL. MURTALA MOHAMMED
Soldier to the core and role model to many other soldiers. He liberated the Mid-West
COL. BENJAMIN ADEKUNLE
"The Black Scorpion"
He was the 1st commander of the rampaging 3rd marine command
COL. OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
Took over from Adekunle. He received the instrument of surrender from the rebels
COL. MUHAMMADU SHUWA
One of the best Commanders of the Army. His division was the bulwark of the army throughout the war
COL. ILLIYA BISALLAH
Took over the 1st Division from Shuwa and continued with the good work of the fighting machine
LT.COL. T.Y. DANJUMA
Proved himself in the skirmishes before the war and proved his gallantly in the thick of the war
COL. I. B. M HARUNA
Took over the 2nd Division from Murtala.Notwithstanding logistic
LT.COL. GIBSON JALO
Took over the 2nd Division from IBM Haruna at the height of hostilities
COL. SHITTU ALAO
Commander of the Air force. He died in active service

# The Heroes of the War

In this chapter, greater prominence is given not only to the field officers otherwise known as "the Brave Captains" and their supporting staff who are recorded elsewhere but also to the brain box of the Gowon Federal Military Government from 1966–1975, that is the members of the Supreme Military Council of Nigeria. These are men of timber and valour, who dedicated their resources, time and energy, to plot the tortuous passage through which the course of the war had to pass to a successful end. Any serious mistake in planning, execution, forecast and how thousands of men and officials in field were coordinated, could spell disaster. Moreover, the way the economic resources and the very difficult diplomatic mine field of foreign relations could be handled, required painstaking decisions. It is in the light of the above that I passionately feel obliged to do justice to these leaders and administrators of the famous Nigeria civil war.

## General Yakubu Gowon:

The Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. A committed believer of one Nigeria, come what may. An amiable officer with enormous foresight and patience. General Gowon was a unique military leader who could treat disaster and triumph just the same without losing his nerves or coolness. A God sent leader to Nigeria at the time the country got him because he assumed the mantle of leadership by the mere act of destiny. If a more hot headed officer had taken the helm of affairs at that

time, only God knows how Nigeria would have overcome its dreadful political problems as created by an over ambitious group of Igbos. He was the architect of the famous philosophy of widely misinterpreted praise of the Geneva Convention "No Victor and No Vanquished" against the well established convention of the Victor dictating the course of affairs. Gowon, in his magnanimity, did that only to ease the Igbo position so as to make them feel comfortable in rejoining the mainstream Federal life. But by all means, the Federal Military Government was the Victor and the rebels were the Vanquished if the history of the Nigerian civil war would qualify for its rightful place. The overwhelming majority of the Supreme Military Council, agreed with him on this. In addition to this, he also refused decorating any officer or man from the Federal side in accordance with the Geneva Convention, even though the victorious Federal army expected this gesture as an old military tradition. General Gowon's argument on both cases, was that the defeated Biafrans were Nigerians who were misled into staging a rebellion against their country by their over ambitious leaders. One other thing to the credit of General Gowon, was that after receiving the instruments of surrender from the rebel authorities, he ordered the Federal side to release hundreds of their prisoners of war. However, when he also issued another order to the rebel authorities to release the federal prisoners of war in their custody in compliance with the Geneva Convention, he received the shock of his life as he learnt that of all the Federal soldiers captured by the rebels only three (3) survivors were found alive. Even of those three, two were indigenes of the Midwestern State (Ika Igbos) and the other one was Commissioner of Police Ibekwe, also an Igbo.

When Gowon enquired to know what happened to the hundreds of Northerners captured as prisoners, he was politely told that they were systematically murdered one after the other in their prison cells through horrible torture by mutilation administered by qualified Doctors of Igbo extraction posing as special agents. In order that this highly provocative situation was not leaked to the victorious Federal soldiers in the fields especially in the liberated areas, General Gowon directed the information to be kept secret. Otherwise it would have led to a blood bath which could have visited unarmed Biafran soldiers and civilians by the Federal troops who were anxiously waiting for the release of their colleagues. General Adeyinka Adebayo was the Chairman of the Prisoners of War Committee.

## Rear Admiral Akinwale Wey:

The Head of Navy from the Cross River State was regarded by all members of the Supreme Military Council as a father. He was cool headed and a believer in the Federal Government victory no matter how long it would take. Admiral Wey provided jokes and joviality that acted as soothing balm on the usually charged atmosphere in the Council during tense moments of debates. He was a pillar and a rallying point for the minorities of the South-South craving the survival of their newly created states of Rivers and the Cross River. He was regarded unofficially as the deputy to the Commander-in-chief.

## Alhaji Kam Salem:

The Inspector General of Police who hailed from Borno was a highly experienced Officer and also highly dedicated to save Nigeria from disintegration. Quiet spoken but dedicated to the principles of security of the nation, he Was extremely patient, resourceful and tolerant. He was second Nigerian Inspector General of Police.

## Brigadier Emmanuel Ikwue:

The head of the Air Force, who took over from late Col. Shittu Alao, who lost his life in a helicopter crash piloted by himself in the early part of the war. General Ikwue, like his predecessor was a young and dynamic officer, who was saddled with a responsibility of organizing air raids on the rebels during the war, but who was handicapped by lack of effective air power to counter the demoralization of Federal troops by Ojukwu's B26 bomber raids of Federal locations as well as on civilian locations in Kaduna and Lagos etc. This frustration continued until the Russian MIG Fighters arrived for Nigeria. Brigadier General Emmanuel Ikwue hailed from Otukpo in the Benue Region.

## Major General Hassan Usman Katsina:

He was at the beginning of the crisis appointed as the first Military Governor of the entire North, then he became the Chairman of the Interim Common Services Agency for the six states created from the old Northern Region. Later, he moved to Army

Headquarters as the Chief of Staff Army. This was the post he held until replaced by General Ejoor- the former Military Administrator of Mid Western state. General Hassan was a born Military Officer with a flair for practical soldiering. By nature and disposition, he possessed those qualities inherent in all Northerners, i.e. courage, fearlessness and dedication. He was one of the best public relations princes from the Dikko Sullubawa royal house of Katsina. He visited troops on a number of occasions to cheer up the officers and men in the front.

## Late General James Oluleye:

General Oluleye was Military Secretary throughout the war. An ex-teacher from the South-West (now Ekiti state), General Oluleye was a very effective military officer who took his assignment very seriously, planning for all field operations. He always wore the toga of seriousness on anything touching aspects of his duty. He kept all members of the Supreme Military Council on their toes when it came to the question of logistics, whether in field operations or in the headquarters. His post was naturally the engine room of the Supreme Military Council.

## Col. Joe Akaahan:

Col. Joseph Ronald Ityowua Akaahan, the Chief of Staff of the Nigerian Army, was the most important casualty early in the war. Colonel Akaahan had been in the army for many years and commanded the battalion stationed at Ibadan, which eventually overthrew the Ironsi regime in the July 1966

takeover. He was returning by helicopter from a trip to the front lines early in August when his aircraft crashed, killing him, the pilot of the plane, and another Junior officer. He was buried in Lagos with full military honours.

## Col. Shittu Alao:

An Air Force officer and member of the Supreme Military Council, who lost his life in a helicopter crash at the beginning of the war. He was an officer vast in ideas and could have done marvelously well if he had lived.

## Navy Commodore Nelson Soroh:

He was the Chief of Staff Navy and 2nd in command to Rear Admiral A. Wey. He was a quiet but very effective member of the Supreme Military Council.

## Deputy Inspector General Fagbola:

He was a member of the Supreme Military Council, second to the Inspector General of Police, Alhaji Kam Salem. DIG Fagbola was intelligent and strong in character on matters of national security. He commanded a lot of service experience from which the council benefited immensely.

## The Twelve Military Governors:

The military governors of the twelve states, in addition to their duties of administering their states were also members of the Supreme Military Council. They jointly controlled the country so as to enhance the military success on the battlefield. As part of their responsibility of ensuring success the states maintained law and order, they mounted the necessary propaganda for the success of the war. They were also to ensure recruitment of soldiers and their training in various military and police training institutions. Furthermore, they were expected to make sure that the essential materials required by the army in the war fronts were made available in uninterrupted supply, either by road or by rail. Each Governor in his own state without let or hindrance, devoted his life to serving these vital requirements.

1. **General Adeyinka Adebayo**: Military Governor of the Western state with his base in Ibadan. Highly experienced and assertive from the onset on the grounds that he was the most senior military officer after Ironsi. Up to the time the regime ended in 1975, General Adebayo did not reconcile himself with the reality of military rule. He was always off the mark on everything and he was treated as such by others who believed that he had a very weak case. The belief was that those that risked their lives in planning and executing the coup would not willingly hand over power to others no matter their seniority. He was a strange exception to

this rule and always believed that he should have been appointed Head of State by the northern counter coup executors on July 29, 1966 on a platter of gold, as if the Northerners were a set of fools.

2. **Alhaji Audu Bako**: Alhaji Audu Bako was a Commissioner of Police and Governor of Kano State. Audu Bako's parents hailed from Argungu in the Northwestern state. He was very much interested in developing agriculture, and was reputed to be the father of the present Kano state's economic development. He had foresight and introduced the construction of the two famous dams in Kano which today are the main live wire of the entire development of Kano state, supplying millions of gallons of water through the cities and villages for domestic, agricultural and industrial use. Audu Bako was indeed the father of modern Kano in all respects.
3. **Deputy Commissioner of Police J.D. Gomwalk**: Military Governor of Plateau state was a very efficient administrator. He hailed from the Plateau province. He was well focused and was committed to the nation and to his people who were a minority ethnic group in the Northern Region before the North was broken into states giving the minorities a sense of determination.
4. **Brigadier Mobolaji Johnson**: Mobolaji Johnson was a Lagosian and Military Governor of Lagos state. He was an efficient and dedicated young Military officer. During his time, infrastructure was brought into Lagos especially the mainland bridges and the flyovers which are still the main attractions in Lagos. It was during his time that Victoria Island and other connected settlements were developed to the admiration of the people. He was an effective member of the Supreme Military Council.

5. **Brigadier Abba Kyari**: A Kanuri man from Maiduguri, Abba Kyari was the Military Governor of the North Central state covering Kaduna, Katsina, Zaria and Daura provinces. He was an effective and fearless military officer who was not afraid to make any contribution during the council debate. He became a Governor at the time that Kaduna was the second hottest seat from the point of view of security. He handled very serious political and security situations especially in the heat of the war. He introduced a system of small scale dams which provided very useful water supply for livestock, irrigation and domestic use.
6. **Brigadier Musa Usman**: An indigene of Borno state (North-East). He was a dynamic Air force officer who made enormous contributions to the council and his state of service. North Eastern state was the largest state in Nigeria and required extensive touring for effective administration of the people of diverse cultures in the vast state.
7. **Brigadier Ogbemudia**: Ogbemudia was an Edo Military officer who qualified for appointment as Military Governor of Midwest state when his predecessor in office, General David Ejoor ran away to Lagos when the rebels sacked and took power in Benin. General Ogbemudia on the contrary, resisted the disgrace meted on his people and secretly made his way for the Federal Troops of 2nd Division under the command of General Murtala Mohammed as the new GOC. Brigadier Ogbemudia was exceptionally brave, calculating and focused. He was so successful as the Military Governor of the State that when the Military Government handed power to the 2nd Republic under Shehu Shagari, General Ogbemudia was elected the civilian Governor of his state.

8. **Brigadier David Bamigboye**: David Bamigboye was a Kwara state indigene with bright disposition as regards performance. A good contributor to the council who kept the political tug of war of the Central Western state under check. His state covered the present Kwara and Kogi states.
9. **Dr. Ukpabi Asika**: Mr. Asika was the Administrator of East Central State. He was an Igbo man from the state who remained in his post as a lecturer in the University of Ibadan. When the Federal troops had been able to liberate Enugu and other chunks of the Igbo land, he was made to move to his seat of power at Enugu. As an intellectual, Mr. Asika made tremendous contribution in resisting the call by Ojukwu for Igbos to return to 'Biafra'. His bravery also showed in accepting the appointment offered to him by General Gowon to be the Administrator of the troubled East-Central State.
10. **Navy Commander Alfred Diete Spiff**: Diete Spiff hailed from Rivers State to which he was appointed Military Governor. At the time of his appointment, his state capital was in a state of hell, being one of the centres of military conflicts. Alfred Diete Spiff was a brave officer and well focused. His people were lucky to have had him as the first Military Governor and founding father of a community that was disintegrated and diverse. For centuries, the people of the new Cross River and Rivers had been in perpetual domination under the Igbo people.
11. **Alhaji Usman Faruk**: He was Assistant Commissioner of Police and Governor of the Northwestern state with capital at Sokoto. This state was the second largest in landmass in the whole Federation. It also housed the heart of the famous Sokoto Caliphate. After the January 15th coup, this state became the most sensitive

area in terms of national security. This is because in addition to its historic pre-eminence, it also bore the greatest brunt of the coup as most of the leading political leaders of the North hailed from there. These were personalities such as the late premier of the North Sir Ahmadu Bello, Alhaji Aliyu Makama Bida, Alhaji Ibrahim Tako who was a Minister in the Tafawa Balewa Government, the Speaker of Northern House of Assembly, Alhaji Umaru Gwandu as well as two leaders of the House of Chiefs, the Sultan Abubakar I and the Emir of Gwandu. All of them formed the core of the northern civilian leadership, who lost either their lives or relations or their jobs. This notwithstanding, the Governor was able to soothe their frayed nerves and got everybody on board for the task of prosecuting the impending civil war. As part of his state duties, the Governor brought about revolution in raising the standard of education by introducing several measures aimed at not only improving the standard, but substantially raising the level of enrolment. He was the author of the exercise leading to the take-over of private institutions, which eventually became the federal project known as Take-over of Voluntary Agencies Institutions under Decree No. 49 of 1976. His administration was characterized by a firm grip, as the only panacea for galvanizing the society that had for long thought, though wrongly, that it was on top of the world due to its historical antecedents. The people therefore thought that they required no innovation! He played a prominent role in sourcing for arms outside Nigeria for the federal/northern troops.

12. **Brigadier U. Jacob Esuene**: Jacob Esuene hailed from the South-Eastern State and was made the Military Administrator of the same

state. Though one of the Air Force officers, Esuene proved his mettle more as a shrewd administrator handling two provinces consisting of diverse peoples. He contributed to the debates in the Supreme Military Council in Lagos. He was patient and calculating in dealing with the affairs of the state which he administered and related well with the remaining other states of the Federation.

13. **Brigadier Rotimi**: Rotimi took over as Military Governor of the Western state from General Adeyinka Adebayo at the end of the civil war. The latter was posted to the Supreme Headquarters and subsequently appointed the Chairman of a committee to investigate post-war atrocities on both sides of the divide. Brigadier Rotimi on taking over, carried out all the policies and proposals of his predecessor until the end of the Gowon Regime on 29th July 1975.

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## Brief Summary of the Stories of War Culled From the New Nigerian News Papers 1967-1975

I have attempted to record graphic details of what happened beginning from the first coup on 15th January 1966 to the end of the war on 15th January 1970. This event, by the will of Allah, coincided with the anniversary of the gruesome murder of our most cherished and venerated leaders, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the North and Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa the first and last Prime Minister of Nigeria together with almost all the most senior crop of military officers from the North. I consider it of historic significance to record the event of the 30 months war as reported by our northern news paper, the New Nigerian as contained in my bound copies of its publications in my private collection now housed in the Arewa House Archives. I took it upon myself to collect and bind all the dailies published in Nigeria as well as the West Africa magazine and any other publication that touched on the Nigerian civil war. I never missed in particular, the New Nigerian Newspapers and the Daily Times. I got them bound as books and kept them in my private collection on an annual basis-which later, were transferred to the Arewa House for safe keeping together with hundreds of copies of other vital documents.

**The Highlights of Land Mark Achievements by the Federal Forces of 1st and 3rd Divisions as Published By the New Nigerian Newspapers on the 22nd January 1970**

*July – September, 1967*

1. Federal Forces captured Okwegbe and Aku. In an abortive attempt by the rebels to retake Nsukka, they left four army officers dead.
2. The final onslaught on Enugu by the Federal troops being imminent, Ojukwu began desperately to withdraw a number of his forces from the Mid West.
3. The rebel administrator for the Midwest, Major Albert Okonkwo, proclaimed the Midwest an independent state of the Republic of Benin. In the Auchi sector, federal troops captured Ekpoma and Uromi.
4. Less than six hours after the so-called proclamation of the still born Republic of Benin, Federal forces, led by Col. Murtala Mohammed, captured Benin city and sacked the government of the rebel administration. Lt. Col. Samuel Ogbemudia, who had earlier escaped from the Mid West when the rebels overran it and reported to the Federal troops, was given a unit of the Nigerian Army to command in the battle against the rebels in the Midwest. He later was appointed Administrator of the Midwest.
5. Federal forces combing Ore, captured 40 rebels in their hideout in the Mid West.
6. Federal forces captured Warri. Brigadier David Ejoor, until August 9th Military Governor of the Mid West, arrived Lagos on a bicycle from

his hideout in the Mid West, abandoning his command and his family.

7. On their onward advance on the rebel capital, the Federal forces captured Okpatu, only seven miles from Enugu.
8. Ukana fell to Federal forces. This is an important road junction. Egede and Awhum also fell to the Federal forces. Federal bombers raided Enugu, silencing the rebel radio for several hours.
9. Planes of the Nigerian Air Force raided Port-Harcourt.

*October 1967*

10. Agbor in the Mid West state fell to the Federal forces.
11. Enugu, the administrative headquarters of the rebel regime, fell to the Federal forces. Action led by Lt. Col. T. Y. Danjuma.
12. Udunede and Ugwashi-Uku fell to the Federal forces. The capture of Asaba completed the liberation of the Mid West.
13. A rebel aircraft in a dawn bombing raid on Lagos was shot down by members of the Federal Guards. It dropped bombs in a number of places including the hardware pharmaceutical department of John Holt which it damaged. It was shot down when it attempted to bomb the Dodan Barracks, official residence of the Nigerian Head of State, Major General Yakubu Gowon.
14. Serious mutiny was reported among the rebel forces. Five people, including the one-time rebel administrator of the Mid West, Lt. Col. Victor Banjo, faced a firing squad for what the rebel leader described as their treachery.
15. Rebel leader Ojukwu, apparently looking for a scapegoat for his military failure, directed

the execution of more army officers and others he called saboteurs of his government's policy.

16. The victims of the ill-fated rebel bomber which was shot down over Lagos, were identified. The majority of the five white mercenaries were identified as Portuguese. Plane was said to have taken off from Sao Tome, a Spanish Island off the coast of the Nigerian waters.
17. Ojukwu was reported to have launched a war of punishment against Onitsha indigenes.
18. Several secret documents on the expansionist plans of the rebels, were recovered by Federal troops from the house of one of the rebel army officers in the Mid West, Lt. Col. B. B. A. Nwajei.
19. Federal troops recovered a machine used by the rebels to print counterfeit Nigerian currency notes from the Asaba Textile Mills.
20. Ojukwu apparently escaping the fury of the enclosing Federal forces escaped to Port Harcourt under the pretext that he was there to address representatives of Ibo leaders.
21. Calabar, administrative capital-designate of the Southeastern state, was captured through combined operations by land and sea of the Federal forces.
22. Nigerian Naval forces on patrol on the River Niger foiled Ojukwu's escape bid.
23. A Dutch cargo ship with arms and ammunition was captured by the Nigerian Navy along the Calabar channel.
24. Mr. Ukpabi Asika, an Ibadan University lecturer of Central Eastern state origin, was appointed Administrator for Enugu and other liberated parts of the Central Eastern state. Mr. Wole Soyinka an Ibadan University lecturer, was detained on the orders of the Federal

Military Government for his acts of sabotage against the Federal Government.

*November 1967*

25. The Government of the South Eastern state appointed Mr. E. B. Edet as Administrator for Calabar.
26. Mr. Ukpabi Asika appointed Mr. Chike Chukura as secretary to the Enugu administration.
27. Federal Government sources disclosed that 20 Asians were among a number of mercenaries killed by the Federal forces in a battle near Calabar.
28. A Lagos Chief Magistrate's Court found the seven-man crew of the Dutch ship Jozina guilty of illegal arms importation into Nigeria and sentenced them to a total of 25 years imprisonment with hard labour.
29. Ikan, the last gateway to the Cameroon Republic, fell to the Federal forces, thus sealing off the rebel escape route.
30. Federal forces captured Imesie near Nkalagu.
31. The OAU peace mission to Nigeria held talks with Federal Government authorities on the Nigerian crisis.
32. Ojukwu rejected a proposal for ending the Nigeria War by the OAU peace mission to Nigeria. The proposal was communicated to the rebel leader by Lt. General Joseph Ankrah, Chairman of the ruling National Liberation Council in Ghana.
33. Federal troops captured Eke, another rebel stronghold.
34. Nkalagu, the cement town, fell to the Federal forces.

*December 1967*

35. Nigerian Air Force planes raided rebel armories and concentrations all over the rebel-held areas.
36. A rebel globe-trotting envoy, Dr. Mikhail Okpara, was refused entry into France.
37. The Federal Military Government issued a release disclosing that the rebels had recruited 150 experienced guerrilla fighting mercenaries from Port Elizabeth, South Africa.
38. Federal forces in the Calabar and Ogoja sectors completely sealed off Ojukwu's possible exit when they linked up at Ekang, near the Cross River, bordering the Cameroon Republic.

*January 1968*

39. In this New Year broadcast to the people of Nigeria, General Gowon urged the military rulers and the fighting forces to do all in their power to break the backbone of the rebellion by March 31. He said that it was necessary to end the rebellion quickly in order to minimize sufferings.
40. Civil disorder continued to break out in most parts of the areas still held by the rebels. Mass protests by women were reported to be serious in Ogba and Awka divisions. The women called on Ojukwu to surrender to Federal authorities and end the war and the untold hardships the war was bringing on them.
41. Ojukwu's army mutinied again over the non-payment of their monthly salaries.
42. A number of rebel soldiers were reported to have sneaked into parts of the Mid West, where they were reported to have occupied four villages in Ijaw Division. They were soon rounded up where they were asking for food from the villagers.

43. Federal forces captured seven rebel towns and villages in their relentless push towards Onitsha from the Nsukka front. The towns and villages captured were Adani, Adabba, Omo, Ibile, Umabu, Anaku and Umueze.
44. The rebel regime began to collect Nigerian currency notes from the local populace to change them to coins.
45. Federal forces captured Igwe where they discovered big arms manufacturing factories where rebels were manufacturing crude weapons in Awka Division.
46. Inflicting heavy casualties on the rebels and killing 12 mercenaries, the Federal forces in the Calabar sector captured Ex-Epura and Upot.
47. The Federal forces captured a number of villages and three towns in the Nsukka sector, Agobi-Iwolo, Mbaba-Owo and Amabu Watertown.
48. Federal forces scored outstanding victories on all fronts. In the Enugu sector, Okano and Ezillu fell, where over 300 assorted rifles, two machine guns, a rocket launcher and other arms were captured from the rebels. Mkpado in the Oban sector was captured; Ugwu, Oha and Uban were added to the Federal forces scores on the Onitsha front.

February 1968

49. Several rebel strongholds, including Oji River, an important town supplying hydro-electricity to many parts of the eastern states were captured. Others were Nofia and Okposi, all in the Onitsha sector.
50. Federal Government sources also disclosed that Federal forces in the Calabar sector killed a total of 23 white mercenaries fighting for the rebels.

51. Federal forces captured Igolo and Ugwuoba in the advance towards Awka.
52. Reports reaching Kaduna from the war fronts disclosed that the disillusioned white mercenaries were deserting the rebel army in large numbers.
53. Awka, the notorious town for the manufacture of rebel arms, was captured by the Federal forces. The fierce battle lasted eight hours. 5
54. Umualu-Ugwuola was captured by the Federal troops on their push towards Onitsha from Awka. A whole rebel battalion said to be commanded by Col. C. D. Nwawo was overrun by the Federal forces.
55. Bombers of the Nigerian Air Force raided Owerri, Orlu, Aba, Umu-Odu and Ndubuhu.
56. Rebel troops deserted Amansee.
57. Amansee fell to Federal troops. The fight took a toll of 50 Chinese mercenaries. Another army officer in the inner circle of the January 1966 coup, Captain Orji was killed as Federal troops continued their advance on Onitsha.
58. Rebels attempted, the third within two weeks, to reoccupy Nsukka. In their abortive attempt which left a large number of them dead, another January 1966 coup planner, Captain Okonji was killed. The fall of Onitsha was almost predictable.
59. Abagana, Ukpo and Enugu-Ukwu, were captured by the Federal forces.
60. White mercenaries in the pay of the rebels went on strike. Jamestown, Oron and Ugep fell to the Federal forces.
61. Onitsha, the commercial town in the Central Eastern state which had been a brainchild to the federal forces since last year, fell to the Federal forces when Federal forces pushing from Awka and Asaba finally linked up in the town.

62. Itu, Mbak and Ikot-Emong fell to Federal troops in the Calabar sector.
63. Lt. Col. Murtala Mohammed, Divisional Commander in the Onitsha sector and Lt. Col. Benjamin Adekunle, Commander of the Calabar sector, were promoted Colonels in appreciation of their brilliant achievements.
64. Obubra, Eket and Ediba fell to the Federal forces.
65. Federal Government sources disclosed that about 150 Ibos from the Central Eastern State were training in guerilla warfare in Tanzania.
66. Uyo, the administrative capital of Calabar province, Etinam and Nwaniba, were captured by Federal forces.
67. Federal forces captured Opobo and Ikot Ekpene.

*April 1968*

68. Abakaliki fell to Federal forces.
69. The Co-operative Union of Nigeria, supplied a large quantity of provisions and textile goods to the administration of liberated areas of the Central Eastern State for normal trade to resume.
70. Rebel leader Ojukwu was reported to have gone into hiding.
71. The rebel pirate radio monitored in Kaduna, disclosed that Ojukwu had gone into a seven-day Lenten retreat. The report also said that his second in command, General Philip Effiong would act in his place. Observers here believed that Ojukwu had probably escaped from the country or was making arrangements to do so

72. Tanzania recognized the illegal regime of Ojukwu. It was the first to recognize the illegal secessionist regime. Others include Ivory Coast, Gabon and Haiti.
73. Afikpo fell to federal troops.
74. Nine villages in the Abakaliki sector were captured shortly after the fall of Afikpo. The villages included Agbaja, Nkwagu, Omagu, Okwefurike, Okpura Okpa Amurzu, Exe-Moha, Achata-Ezze and Omuebe.
75. Dr. Okoi Arikpo, Federal Commissioner for External Affairs, conferred with the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, and Commonwealth Secretary General, Arold Smith about the Nigerian crisis.
76. Dr. Arikpo announced in London that the Federal government was prepared to start peace talks with the rebels by May 1st
77. The Federal Government published a seven-point resolution on the proposed peace talks with the rebels.
78. The rebel pirate radio announced that the rebel regime had a four-man delegation awaiting the proposed peace talks with the Federal authorities and indicated that they had chosen Dakar, Senegal, as venue of the peace talks.
79. In a five-hour gun-battle with Federal forces, rebels were routed at Patani in Ijaw land. Federal forces converged on Port Harcourt. The headquarters of the Shell BP was among many umportant commercial and critical assets bombed by the rebels.
80. Chief Anthony Enahoro and a rebel envoy Sir Louis Mbanefo, met in London for exploratory peace talks.
81. Four top-ranking rebel army officers were executed on the orders of the rebel leader on charges of desertion. Gabon accorded rebel regime of Ojukwu diplomatic recognition. Kampala (Uganda) was chosen a venue for peace talks.
82. Heavy fighting between the Federal forces and the rebel army raged around Port-Harcourt.
83. Nigeria cut diplomatic relationship with Ivory Coast following that country's recognition of the rebel regime.

84. Federal forces fighting around Port Harcourt captured the towns of Okrika, Elelenwa and Obiogbo. Foreign and local journalists visited the war trials.
85. In a dawn broadcast, rebel leader Ojukwu admitted over radio that his troops were being defeated on all fronts and that he was no longer fighting for military victory. Federal forces completely liberated Port Harcourt, the rebels last link with the outside world
86. Zambia accorded Ojukwu diplomatic recognition. Federal Government severed diplomatic relations with Zambia. Supreme Military Council meeting ended in Lagos.
87. A seventeen-man delegation to the peace talks with the rebels in Kampala, led by Commissioner for Information and Labour, Chief Anthony Enahoro left Lagos by air for the Ugandan capital. General Gowon addressed a press conference attended by visiting foreign and local journalists.
88. Rebel leader Ojukwu continued to mourn the fall of Port Harcourt. Nnewi, home of the rebel leader, was reported under fire ofthe Federal artillery.
89. Peace talks opened between federal and rebel representatives in Kampala, Uganda.

## From the Interior of Biafra

The following are from, *War Report* edited by Amaechi Umeorah. The document was put together by a collection of journalists and observers who saw it happen.

April 4th, 1969:

In the kind of action that typifies the civil war, a detachment of Biafran troops last week attacked a Nigeria- held village named Umuneke. It was mid-after-noon, the Hottest part of the day and the world seemed made of glaring dust and prickly sweat. The men of the Biafran 55

Battalion were a motley crew, mostly barefoot, lacking uniforms and so short of weapons that a single bolt-action rifle served two or three men. They had taken up positions around Umuneke in the thick, bone-dry bush. A blocking party had infiltrated the rear of the village and set up the home made electrically detonated mines the soldiers call "Ogbunigwe"" The strategy was simplicity itself: drive the Nigerians back into the mines and detonate them.

At four O' clock, the Brigade Commander, Lt. Col. Lambert Ihenacho, drove up в camouflaged Land Rover with ammunition. The cartridges were counted out like gold nuggets, the 30-cell machine gun ammunition belts handled like so many rare Grecian urns. Ihenacho, at 25, the youngest Brigade Commander in the Biafran Army, supervised the process, his hands on the grip of a captured submachine gun. Then Ihenacho led the way up the trail leading to the village. The path was lined with civilians, young and old. "*They help carry out the wounded*". the colonel explained as he politely murmured greetings."*They are all volunteers".*

August 29th 1969:

With conditions worsening, Biafra's Chief of Staff, General Odumegwu Ojukwu, last week sought to break a with Nigeria over the Red Cross deadlock plane in retaliation for raids on their territory by Biafran light planes flown by Swedish pilots. They have agreed to resumption of the flights-but only if Biafra agrees to meet two stiff conditions-food planes must fly during daylight to distinguish them from gunrunners, who often head at night for Uli, Biafra's principal airstrip and have proved difficult to distinguish from mercy flights. They must also land at Lagos or another Nigerian airfield to be searched for contraband before proceeding to Uli.

Biafra, which had previously rejected both conditions, finally agreed to the day light fights but remained adamant against landings in Nigeria.

"What's to prevent them", asked a Biafran official, "from seizing a Red Cross plane, loading it with fifty commandos and forcing the crew to take them to Uli to destroy it? The Biafrans also fear that newsmen and other western observers will be removed from such planes, thereby depriving Biafra of badly needed foreign publicity.

Under such circumstances, the talks on resuming the flights remained stalemated-as does virtually everything else about the two-year-old war. Neither army is able to mount a consistent offensive. Pope Paul, during his African visit, was unable to bring Ojukwu and Nigeria's leader, General Yakubu Gowon, to a bargaining table. Neither were Harold Wilson, Charles de Gaulle or Haile Selassie, who heads the Organization ofAfrican Unity at the time.

To secure independence in any peace discussions, Ojukwu is relying on a strategy designed to embarrass Gowon. By attacking the Federal oilfields, Biafra hopes to press the oil companies (Gulf, Philips, Shell, British Petroleum and Itatian Agip Nuclear) to talk Gowon into negotiations. Though Nigerian Officials admit oil production had dropped to 60,000 barrels a day because of the war, the oilmen insist that they have no intentiON of interfering в an attempt to achieve a cease-fire. To step up the pressure, one of Ojukwu's rocket-equipped Swedish planes hedge hoped to a Gulf tank farm at the mouth of the Escravos River. Biafra claimed that four storage tanks were destroyed by the hit-and-run attack; Gulf said that only one was set ablaze, but it added that one worker was killed and six others wounded.

After 20 months of fierce fighting, the Biafran war is at a virtual stalemate. The only thing about it that seems certain to intensify is human suffering. Igbo tribesmen under Lt. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu have retreated into what he calls "*this steadily diminished dot*", Their only remaining city is an overcrowded market

town called Umuahia. Their last significant link to the outside world is an air strip 50 miles at Uli. Though attacking Nigerians have the advantage of superior weaponry supplied by Britain and the Soviet Union, the Biafrans within the dot have shorter supply lines and less front to cover, plus increased supplies of French guns and ammunition. Above all, they have a grim determination to fight on.

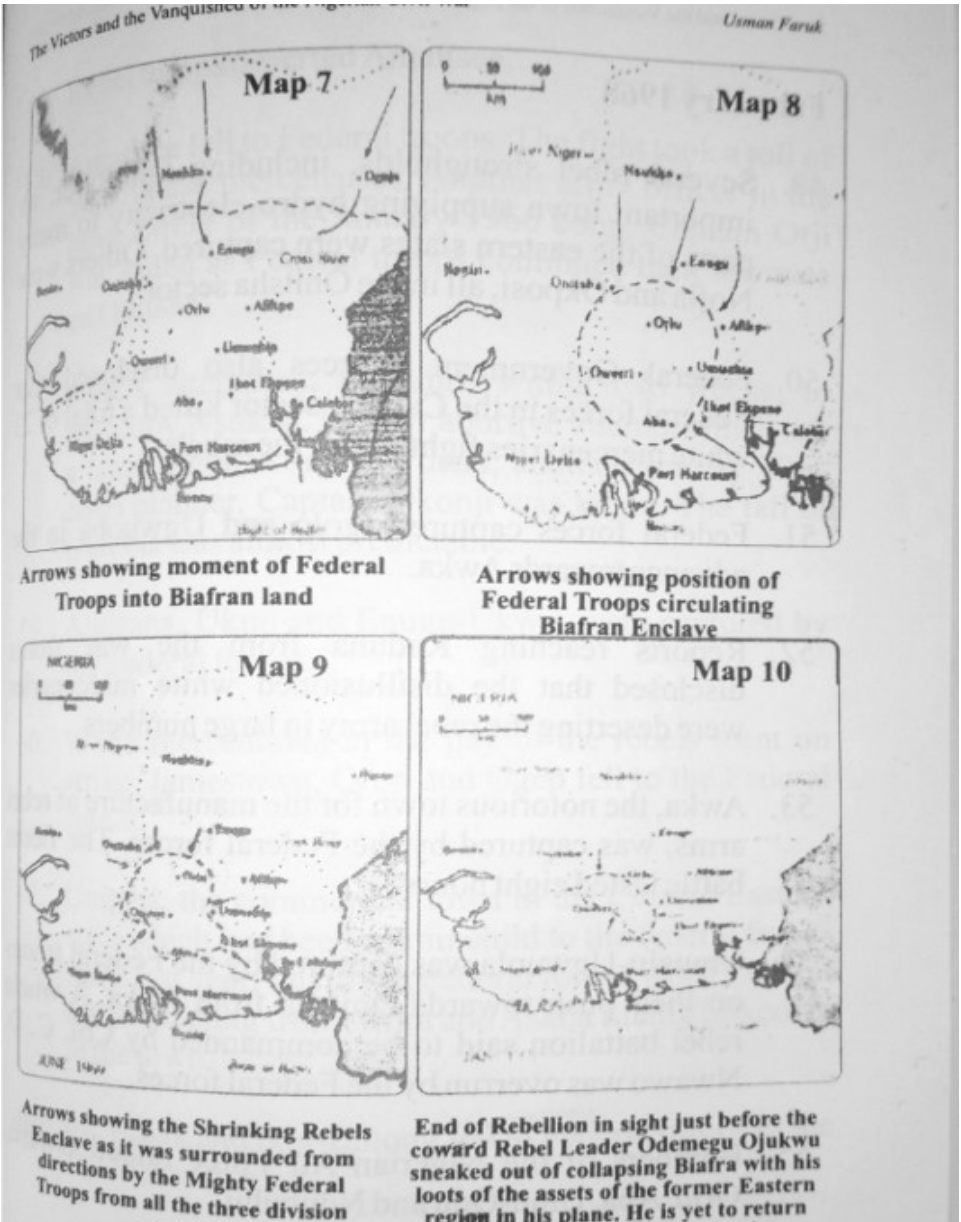
Daily life in Biafra consists now of an acid combination of fear and hunger. A 17 year old widow named Agnes Eke, wept as she recounted the death of her 24 year parents old husband *"I have no child. I have no food, my are dead and my father-in-law cannot feed me. it is better if I die"* then she cried again, and others Surely cried with her. Another widow called Catherine, who present has one child, stood tight lipped, thin and desperate, "*Give me salt*" she said ""*we Igbo are not beggars, but if my child is to live I must have salt"*, Farmer Ihedioha Ejam said that his farms were empty "*Vandals and refugees ate all my seed Now I have nothing to eat and nothing to plant*".

The situation was much the same in other villages. Half of them were empty, half were bombed to pieces. The red carcasses of huts stood forlornly in the rain. Naked children with swollen bellies and testicles stood quietly about. I discovered one isolated refugee camp containing 20,000 people, where white worms cost $3 a cup, and locusts 4, salt was $20 a cup and gari, a leached cassava, cost $1 for three cups. Before the war, salt was 5 cents and gari went at 20 cups for a shilling.

To their training and experience, some thing must have been really wrong with the Biafran High Command. The points enumerated here were the very few cases that weakened the rebels' army and not that starvation as a weapon of war was used against them by the Federal Government through the blockade ofland, sea and air routes as was

alleged by them as part of their defence for the failure to win the war in advance.

1. July 6: Federal forces invade the East and take Nsukka after days of fighting.
2. Another push from the North East captures the rebel stronghold at Ogoja.
3. July 25: Nigerian Navy lands a force which takes Bonny without too much difficulty.
4. August 9: Ojukwu's men cross Niger Bridge and


The Victors and the Vanquished of the Nigerian Civil War
Usman Faruk
Map 7
Map 8
Arrows showing moment of Federal Troops into Biafran land
Arrows showing position of Federal Troops circulating Biafran Enclave
Map 9
Map 10
Arrows showing the Shrinking Rebels Enclave as it was surrounded from directions by the Mighty Federal Troops from all the three division
End of Rebellion in sight just before the coward Rebel Leader Odemegu Ojukwu sneaked out of collapsing Biafra with his loots of the assets of the former Eastern region in his plane. He is yet to return

# CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## The Genesis of the Fall of Biafra

There were several reasons and weaknesses which were the main factors for the retarded movement of rebel troops and hence their eventual fall during the conflict. Few of such weaknesses and counter productive tendencies to their over-all war effort, are worthy of mention in order to understand what had actually gone wrong for them in the in war. The first was the rivalry between those who called themselves the freedom fighters i.e. the young and dynamic youth who joined the rebel fighting machine during the crisis and the regular Army. These were carefree fighters who strongly believed that they were the real backbone of the Biafran army. They were a group of fairly educated secondary and post secondary school students, who because of the closure of all educational institutions in the East then, found employment in the armed forces. In addition to this, they felt that they were more likely to lose their future than the professional soldiers who were originally part of the federal troops before the beginning of the crisis.

While the professional soldiers felt that they were the real well trained fighters with a lot of experience of war tactics, the young group felt that the old brigade lacked the energy and was unnecessarily cautious in matters of fighting. The immediate consequence of these conflicting ideologies was the creation of moody soldiers with no loyalty and no discipline. Naturally, the higher

command, and the training were all assigned to the old leaving the "freedom fighters to form the bulk of the foot soldiers. With this type of marriage of necessity, therefore, no army could stand the persistent onslaught of the well trained federal soldiers. The infighting, the and mutual suspicion from both the new breed fighters and the old breed, definitely produced the greatest weakness in the Biafran command-their sheer number notwithstanding. The whole arrangement looked like two parallel lines that would never meet-and indeed they did not meet until the end of the war. This, therefore, degenerated into a killing apathy or lukewarm approach as well as an I don't care attitude. When this was added to the long drawn military operations and without hope of quick victory or solutions, matters became worse. No wonder that things gradually became unbearable. For instance, the professional soldiers became less in number due to the gradual rise in casualties while the new undisciplined and frustrated youth soldiers who were denied leadership role, found real enemies in their superiors.

While the foregoing operational problem of the Biafran army was wreaking havock on the performance of their troops, another ugly and probably more devastating toll was taking place on the general morale of the entire army. This serious and killing incident took the form of lack of concern in terms of welfare, food and equipment for the ordinary fighting soldiers by their superiors who served themselves and their ranks with commensurate and adequate supplies of all necessities of life in their command posts. Only minimal food and supplies reached the rank and file while the officers made sure that they had the lion's share of any allocation. Officers of the rebel army were known to

be engaged in quarreling among themselves on any matter pertaining to welfare of themselves and not of their men. The situation is graphically painted in Arthur A. Nwankwo's book, **Nigeria: The Challenge of Biafra**:

"Most of the senior officers rose so high that they lost contact with the ground forces. Many concentrated their efforts on trying to make their position more comfortable. It was common for the commander of a fighting brigade to live in a plush electrified camp with modern appliance, while the boys in the trenches lived like animals with little or no clothing. Living in completely different conditions from their charges, the commanders frequently issued orders which betrayed a dismal lack of contact with reality. Only fortunate military units ate once a day. Most averaged one meal in three days. Troops often went for a whole week without a meal. When there was a meal, it wasn't a meal as such-just a cup ofdry gari. The soldier was expected to find some water, soak the garri and 'smoke' it. His diet was completely deficient in protein and vitamins. The wretched condition of the 'Biafran' was clearly evident of reaching the breaking point(P.64)”

From what one was privileged to know and read in the various intelligence reports and supported by dispatches of foreign correspondence inside the rebel enclave, the military situation within the Biafran army was that of sea of corruption, incompetence and indiscipline. To say the least, every officer of the high command was a king to himself while the rotten structures upon which forces were built could hardly endure to support the rats and lizards that sought shelter to avoid forming the only meat to the lower ranks. The

various stories and publications made available to the public by some of the surviving Biafran officers, all went to confirm the chaotic situations within the armed forces as well as their civilian population. The latter unfortunately came to realize later the deceit of their leaders who at the beginning of the war brain washed the population that they were dedicated to the cause of Biafran victory even with the last drop of their blood. In such a confused situation, there were more soldiers who died of hunger and deprivation than from the effects of bullet wounds. In fact, most other ranks were too absorbed in searching dead bodies of federal troops for anything they could salvage from dead bodies as loot which was the only means of their survival. Thus, most of them were far from the front lines, where only the flying federal bullets were the commodity available. The stock in trade of most Biafran men and officers was about how they would live so that they could come back to mother Nigeria to trade on the booty they had looted from the dead but not fighting to save Biafra!

The conflict, on the whole, was not limited to officers and their men but even among the Biafran High Command which at one point resulted in court marshalling and execution of top ranking officers of the Command. 11 should also be noted that during the civil war, both sides had experienced great constraints in operations, in welfare and in general shortages of essential materials required in war. But on the whole, while the federal side faired reasonably well with minimum effort to ensure fairness in enforcing discipline, the Biafran side recorded the most glaring cases oflack of fairness, experience and above all naked greed on the part of the High Command and the Officers, to the extent that the foot soldiers (i.e. those engaged in

trenches and deep forests) became enemies of their superiors with total disrespect and disloyalty. No army anywhere in the world would continue to obey their superiors when the latter was a bunch of cheats without a soul. It was the inherent greed of the Biafran High Command and distribution of the welfare package any where and at any time, that was the bane of their life-like a gang of robbers. It was much easier for armed robbers to plan and execute robbery than for the Biafran officers to assemble and share the booty fairly.

Another area where the rebel focus was at variance with that of the federal troops was in planning and monitoring. They did not plan for any operation, neither did they monitor it from a vintage point, where they could easily spot weaknesses and find solutions to them while the was still on. In most cases, the High Command, operation the Middle Officers and their men-all together found in the field, carrying out the same operation. This blind attack method left the Biafran High Command with no room for detecting mistakes and therefore for them. This was like a situation where correcting a referee and his linesmen took to the field and tried to play the ball together with the players. This example was a typical situation when several Brigade Commanders, their Officers and men all ran into the battle fields to prosecute the war. This of course, depicted their clear incompetence, lack of planning and outright panic response to war situation. And in the face of desperation, the rebel high command had to resort to high handedness to cover for their lapses and failure in the major chapters of the conflicts. In most cases, loss of important strongholds to the enemy was inexplicable to the ordinary people and in order to keep morale high,

something drastic and dramatic had to be done. Again a quote from Arthur Nwankwo's book:

*In the frenzy and confusion that preceded the loss of the Midwest state and the town of Nsukka, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Lt. Col. Victor Banjo, Major Alale (a trade unionist who was the Army's Public Relations Officer) and Samuel .A. Agbor (a career officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) who significantly were proponents of the Reforms, were alleged to have conspired to overthrow the Biafran Government. They were tried, found guilty of treason and publicly executed before a crowd ofjeering, booing, laughing and crying Biafrans. (P. 21-22)*

As a contrast to what obtained with the Federal troops consisting of the much larger and more complex divisions, there was not a single incident where it became necessary on a mere suspicion of sabotage among the officers or men to warrant the серьезный need to court-martial officers who were in great demand and vital to the prosecution of the war.

# CHAPTER SIXTEEN

## The British Legacy

The fact that Nigerians have remained almost completely unchanged from the original classification by the British, despite over one hundred years of structural advancement, means that our colonial masters had indeed made an accurate analysis of our social and behavioral nature. This is to say that, when it comes to the question of commerce and business, or to acquisition of wealth and dominating the business life of the country, the average southerner, be he from the West or East, would excel. This is evident in the lopsided economic power of today's Nigeria in favour of the South. But, when it comes to the question of courage both physical and psychological, an average man from the North has no parallel. Even more, he believes and still practices the old principle of "live and let live". Like their forefathers in the first and second world wars, the present day Northerners who joined the federal army to fight in the Nigerian civil war did it with the sole purpose of patriotism and pure sense of adventure, with enormous courage far above the average. These were the qualities which the British detected in an average Northerner of those days and which made him the best fighting machine of the 19th century. And it was these same qualities that enabled the federal troops, more than 80% of whom were Northerners, to crush Ojukwu's rebellion.

Furthermore, it is my belief that it would be of immense interest to our younger generations to know that my detailed research and analysis on the civil war reveal that only about 5% of the northern strategic population, those within the age bracket of 18-30 years, participated in the war. This was out of a reserve of fifteen million youths in a northern population of eighty million. This is also in accordance with world strategic studies. In other words, the twenty northern states possess (even now) a requisite striking force of forty million young and agile men and women to carry arms and wage a war for twenty years without a break and without feeling any serious effect. This means in reality, that the thirty months civil war merely scratched the tip of our enormous potential of virile manpower (of the martial race fame) for fighting at any given time.

The lesson of the Nigerian civil war should inform the enlightened northern leadership to seriously endeavour to train this potential force and turn it into a greater, awesome fighting power for our future protection since we have no other viable alternative except to stay put in Nigeria, no matter the odds!

However, one should reasonably concede that one might find some faults in certain aspects of an average Northerner, which may include relative greed, but certainly not cowardice. I say with pride that we are the children of the sun, having been baked in the crucible of wars and have descended from a long line of gladiators as ancestors, who have been tempered and hardened by swords and spears of war over centuries, to the extent that valour has been ingrained in our bone marrow and blood.

The best assets every Northerner possesses are in-born valour and courage to face any adversity, especially when it comes to physical and armed struggle. He fears no one, comes either at home or on the battlefield. The profile of the Iraqi Saddam Hussein is coincidentally a typical leader, psychological make-up of an average Northerner and his like General Patton said, *"a Northerner does not go to war to die, but he goes to war to make the enemy die, any time any day!".* Degree and paper qualifications, good as they are for modern warfare, especially in logistics, are no substitutes for bravery. Our boys, in the battlefields with Russian guitar-type light guns, during the war days used to say, "*it was not the gun but the man behind the gun that was the determining factor in winning the war*"

## The Hausa Constabulary

This was a special detachment of Hausa fighting men under a British Officer called Captain Glover, who having worked with them and known their fighting abilities, used them to subdue difficult areas in the pre-colonial era and beyond. There was basically no part of the areas that were to be called Nigeria later that the Hausa constabulary did not help to subdue or liberate and through its expeditions in the area, the British had no equal for the Hausa detachment, when it came to tackling difficult military situations.

Probably, the most popular legend of the Hausa constabulary was in Lagos, when after Captain Freeman had succeeded Glover in Lagos, he established the Armed Hausa Police Force, which turned out to be the most powerful threat to all

slave trading forces in the Yoruba area. The Ijebu and the Egba armies that supported Lagos to carry on with the slave trade, after the British had ended the evil trade, met with the ferocity of the Hausa Force, which defeated them woefully and ended slave trade in the area. In fact, the devastation and routing of the Ijebu and Egba armies was so complete that one Yoruba writer described the Hausa fighting force as ***"the beginning of the terror in Yorubaland"***.

It will be recalled that a detachment of the Hausa force was used by the same Captain Glover to prosecute the Ashante war of 1873-1874. It was another stubborn and difficult situation but the reliable Hausa Constabulary ended the uprising with military precision.

Interestingly, all the fighting men in all cases were Hausa from the core Hausa states or Hausa speaking soldiers. The main qualifications were the Hausa factor, resoluteness, loyalty, fighting ability and spirit. In essence, a combination of these made the Northern fighting machine.

Ironically, it was a variety of the same Hausa fighting force that defeated the Sokoto Caliphate for the British in 1903-1904. Without the Hausa fighting machine, the British would have been at a loss as to what to do in that difficult period and terrain. And perhaps the story would have been different if the British themselves were to fight against the Hausa army.

What I am saying is straight forward. In any situation, the northern soldier is an embodiment of reliability and courage. He has always been so and will forever remain so.

Here is the testimonial from Major General Sir Charles of the British-Cameroon regiment in early 1900. Dobbel the Hausa machine to tame the wild Cameroon he said inter alia:

*"Give me the Hausa Soldier—*

*no day too long—*

*no task too difficult*."

## The Destruction of the Long Juju of Arochukwu: The Northern Factor

Another very good example of the northerners' special gift of daring and courage, even in those dark days of history, is this simple but instructive episode. Once upon a time, long after British rule had been established, following the pacification or conquest of the various native overlords, certain pockets of troubled areas still remained untamed. This was because of existing native power cults in many parts of the hinterland. Among them was the Igbo Juju (cult worship) of Arochukwu.

The Aros were an Igbo group that incorporated Ibibio elements. They were both priests and clever traders. In both capacities, they traveled and traded extensively in Igbo land. Various settlements were established and through them, the Aro dominated the local markets. They specialized in the buying and selling of slaves and it is indeed through them that the coastal communities received slaves and other commodities for the vital export trade. Trade routes

in the hinterland, which the Aro dominated, radiated in all directions, but the Aro domination did not amount to a comprehensive political control.

As oracle agents and traders, they wielded tremendous influence. They deployed mercenaries in Igbo and Ibibio inter-village wars in order to facilitate the capture of slaves for export. But the Aro did not, during the 19th century or earlier, evolve into a centralized organization with which to sustain an empire. When the British intruded into the country towards the end of 19th century, they believed that there was an Aro empire and grossly exaggerated the role of the Aro in Igbo and Ibibio village affairs. The result was that, at the first opportunity, the local British representatives mounted a serious military expedition, which destroyed the long Juju shrine and subsequently subdued one Igbo and Ibibio village group after the other. This was how the episode gained prominent historical mention.

## The Aro Expedition and its Aftermath

In 1891, the British established in the Delta, what was in fact, though not in name, a colonial government, the Oil Rivers Protectorate (renamed in 1893 as the Niger Coast Protectorate). In 1896, the officials of this Government began the penetration of southern Igbo land. In that year, two British officials visited Bende to discuss free trade and the abolition of slavery with local Aro representatives. At the beginning of the discussions, the interpreter told the Aro to remove their hats as a sign of respect. Immediately, every Aro that had a hat, put it on and those that hadn't borrowed for

the purpose and an ancient Aro orator made a speech of defiance thus: *"the white men may have come by the sun, they may have come by the moon, or they come through the clouds, but the sooner they went back to where they had come from and remained there, the better".*

The Aro field force of 1901-2 tackled a special problem. Authorizing this expedition, the government complained that the Aros through their long juju at Ibun, had enriched themselves by fines and fees collected during their consultation practices or through punishing those devotees in default of payment. The influence which the Aros exercised in blocking British penetration into the Igbo hinterland, was compared by R. L. Antrobus of the Colonial Office with that of the Ashantis of the Gold Coast (later called Ghana). Though equally intelligent, the Aros lacked the military might and organization of the Ashantis of Ghana. Their alleged military prowess turned out to be a myth, which was exploited by the pre-emptive expedition organized against them between 1901 and 1902.

Several factors delayed this expedition. In June 1899, Moor had expected the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) to spare at least 400 men, to send against the Ikwes and the Inokun branch of the Aros, who were harassing traders along the Cross River. F. D. Lugard, then in charge of the WAFF, could not release the men before arrangements were completed for the revocation of the Royal Niger Charter and the subsequent re-organization of the troops. Moor postponed the expedition to January 1900, but then became too busy with the new administration of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, after the transfer of more territories from the Royal Niger Company. Then, the Ashanti war broke out early in 1900 and

the Secretary of state, J. Chamberlain, advised Moor not to press the Aro expedition until their position at the Gold Coast and South Africa had improved. Eventually, the Colonial Office sanctioned the pre-emptive expedition for the dry season of 1901-2, *"at the time which suits us best, lest the Aros may force our hands and compel us to engage in punitive expedition at some most inconvenient time"*

Having received approval, Moor reiterated the principal aims of the expedition. The abolition of slave dealing was the most important. The others included the destruction of the long juju and opening up the Aro territory to civilization, the inducement of the people to engage in legitimate trade, the introduction of cash currency to replace slaves, brass rods and manilas, and the establishment of a labour market in lieu of slavery. The Aro expedition, which engaged a total of 1,745 officers then began on the 15th November 1901 and ended on the 23rd March 1902. Lt. Col. Montenaro led the entire Aro field force, which comprised a regiment from Northern Nigeria, a battalion composed of mainly Hausas from the Lagos Colony, 14 special officers from England and Hausa troops in the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. For political advice, 28 members of the Protectorate's administrative staff accompanied the troops.

Militarily, the campaign was remarkable for the use of converging columns, which caused Arochukwu, the Aro capital, to fall to Colonial troops on 24th December 1901. The troops took the capital and destroyed the long juju with little resistance. The whole operation demonstrated that the Aros were not a fighting group. It also demonstrated the efficacy of the Hausa as a veritable fighting machine. In Moor's recommendations for a refusing gratuity to

the officers and men engaged in the Aro Force, the Colonial Officers stressed that, unlike the exceptional arduous Sierra Leone expedition (1898) and the Ashanti campaign hardship, the conditions of the Aro operations had not been fulfilled to the same extent. C. Strachey of the Colonial Office regarded the employment of the contingents and special service officers brought from outside the Protectorate as the only aspect of the Aro field force which made it exceptional and brought it outside the category of ordinary punitive measures carried out by local forces.

During the same operation, the troops arrested the Okori Torti, the ring leader and other Chiefs accused of murdering some 400 men, women and children at Obegu, on August-November, 1891. Moor considered bringing to justice those responsible for this massacre, another object of duty of the Aro field force. All earlier efforts made by British traders i.e. the Royal Niger Company and later British Authorities, when the latter took over the affairs of the former company authorities, to establish law and order in those isolated but stubborn areas, failed. Arochukwu was among such areas that were outstandingly hostile to any rule of law. It was so difficult to maintain law in the area because the natives were under the strong influence of a deity known as the long juju, even by modern terminology. It used to govern all actions and reactions of the natives and the juju was opposed to British rule. Several attempts were made to destroy the shrine and its contents by conventional police units, but without good results. The reason for the continuous failure of the police at last, was traced to the mixed nature of the force. When a modern operational unit approached the shrine or the town to carry out their operation, all its personnel of

southern origin would be gripped by fear, and in all cases, would run away, leaving Northerners who then became weakened numerically and tactfully, because of their colleagues' desertion from the main unit. It was later identified that no Southerner, especially Igbos, had the guts to partake in such an operation, because of the fear of the cult and the centuries old taboo that no man or woman could dare go near the Arochukwu long juju, let alone destroy it without paying the supreme sacrifice instantly. It took a long time and after heavy losses of men and materials, before the European Commissioners of Police realized that they could not succeed in stamping out the threat of the long juju, unless they reenacted and returned to the abandoned principle of the discarded Hausa Constabulary, even if it meant only for that temporary and specific period. With this resolution, the colonial authority raised a unit, made up of mainly Northerners and as was in the case in the earlier years, charged it with the responsibility of destroying the Arochukwu long juju. When the preparation was concluded and the operational orders were given out, the unit set forth and within a few days, the dreaded shrine was stormed and destroyed without any serious repercussions.

During the early part of colonial rule, when pacification of pockets of resistance in different parts of both the Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria, as well as the Colony of Lagos developed, the new Colonial Masters relied heavily on the northern elements in their security outfits to flush out and destroy pockets of such resistance. The importance of these random historical recollections is very essential in understanding the socio-political situation in the present day Nigeria and of course in the future. The

Nigerian civil war has proved to us that our socio-political behaviours have not changed a bit, despite over 100 years of our history (1860-2000).

## The Battle of Sokoto (1903-1904): The Brave Captains

Further proof that an average Northerner is not prone to petty beliefs or easily susceptible to undue superiority, or easily intimidated by threats and taboos could be seen from stories of earlier European campaigns against both the Southern and the Northern Regions. During such wars, unlike the Southern peoples in both the army and Police who were afraid to partake in operations that affected their idols/juju shrines or palaces of their deity-like rulers, like the Obas and Obis, the northern elements in the forces displayed no such fear. They obeyed the commands of their officers without hesitation or fear even in situations where the palaces of revered and powerful emirs were the targets of attack. In fact, the important and decisive battle waged by British troops against the retreating Sultan of Sokoto, Ahmadu Muhammadu Attahiru the first, at a town north of the present day Gombe called Mbormi, was executed in 1903 in two phases, without any shivers from the northern soldiers in the campaign. The first was on the 13th of May, 1903 and the second, this historic attack in which the Sultan was killed, and the famous caliphate flag (symbol of the aristocratic identity) captured with heavy casualties, including three European Officers. It was that battle that ended the resistance of the Northerners to British Colonial invasion, paving the way for the take-over of both Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria and

the Colony of Lagos. But it was not easy for the imperialist army as they fought to take Mbormi in their first attempt and were repelled by the Sultanate army. They had to withdraw and come back with heavy reinforcements from Sokoto, Kano, Bauchi, Lokoja and Gujba. They had been frightened by the reception they had on their last encounter c Sultanate army, but they finally conquered Mbormi and the Sultanate army on 28th of June 1903.

The events that led to all this, had started in March 1903, when Sokoto the then capital of the Caliphate and the most powerful seat of government in the whole of the sub-sahara region at that time, was stormed by the imperial British army. The incumbent Sultan of Sokoto had left the city through a secret path, with his family and half of his army, tactfully leaving behind the other half, to continue engaging the British troops. The Sultan's motive was to migrate to a place around Gombe called Bima in fulfillment of an age-long prediction. The prediction, which was written in Ajami by one of the daughters of Sheikh Usman Danfodio (founder of the dynasty) Nana Asmau, was handed down from generation to generation in the Caliphate. It said that a time would come when mankind would be threatened with either extermination or ruthless destruction by an unknown calamity. Whenever such an event occurred, the Caliphate with all its followers should move to Gombe (eastwards) and surrounding hills of Bima, a divine retreat and for the safety of life and property. Every close follower of the history of the Caliphate including learned scholars, knew the prophecy. It followed therefore, that when the colonial incursion from the sea had overrun all the southern kingdoms and some emirates of the Caliphate, starting with Lokoja, Bida, Ilorin, Yola, Kontagora, Bauchi, Argungu, Kano and finally right on the

western gates of Sokoto itself, it became clear to the interpreters of the old prophecy and the Sultan himself, that surely the dreaded period had finally came. Thus, migrating from Sokoto, Sultan Ahmadu Attahiru and his formidable entourage, made their way through a difficult terrain between Kano and Zaria on their way to the Gombe area. The British, who later learned of his escape, mounted a chase along the long route. They strengthened their search by means of paid security agents along all possible known paths that the retreating Sultan might take. However, things were made more complicated for the colonial army because their desperate attempt to locate the whereabouts of the Sultan gave vent to the rumour that the Sultan had embarked on the age-old expected religious migration, signaling the end of the world. This consequently, encouraged mass movement of the population from Bida and Kontagora, whose emirs had already been captured earlier by the British troops. Similar exodus commenced in earnest in adjoining emirates of Zaria and parts of Kano.

The report of the capture of the Emir of Bauchi, Umaru, had also echoed and had sent shivers among the ranks of other inhabitants, who later joined the mass movement, with the sole purpose of joining the Sultan, wherever he might be. The Sultan, after many narrow escapes, finally arrived on the fringes of Gombe and found initial shelter in a very powerful fortress of the walled city of Mbormi, under the control of a powerful Sheikh, known as Sheikh Jibrilla. The latter had over the years, made himself the most powerful leader of a religious movement east of Kano and Zaria. The Sultan was welcomed and well received in the city. He stayed there pending the final preparations to proceed to the promised land around Bima hills, less than twenty miles east of Gombe. Unfortunately, it was

there that the British troops caught up with him and the most ferocious and grueling battle occurred between the Sultan's forces and those of the colonial army.

It is a matter of pride to read from the dispatches of the Commanding Officers to the Governor General Lord Lugard, that the Sultan's army fought for several days. The intensity and ferocity of the battle was so great that at times, the colonial army thought that the Northerners on the other side of the battlefield were being aided by foreign forces. It was not until the battle was over and after the British officers had conducted a thorough search among the dead and wounded, that they confirmed that there were no foreigners in the army of the late Sultan. The latter, stood their ground until there was no soul on his feet i.e., until thousands of them were either killed or too badly wounded to put up any further fight. None of them ran away despite the massive firepower of the British army. It was said in the book of Wazirin Sokoto entitled Rasala that dead bodies of the Sultan body guards, were found and counted around the body of the Sultan. The only prisoners the colonial forces took from the native soldiers of the slain Sultan were the wounded or those who had lost their local arms and horses. That was one rare occasion where Northerners were pitted against an opposing Commander of a divergent philosophy. A rare occasion when Northerners were pitted against Northerners and both sides fought gallantly and religiously for their respective masters.

There is an important lesson to learn from this singular act of unprecedented and sheer courage. Despite the hegemony of the native fighters on both sides, each group, nevertheless, remained absolutely

loyal and dedicated to its employers, right to the end. There was no waiver, no looking back and no hesitation in carrying out each group's responsibilities. All soldiers from both sides of the battlefield, were a hundred percent of northern stock, except the four British colonial officers commanding the colonial side of the army. What a demonstration of loyalty! What a stupendous feat! That has been the hallmark of the northern soldier to this day.

These sterling and courageous qualities of our forefathers in the colonial war period of the 19th and 20th centuries, once more re-echoed during the Nigeria civil war. It was the totality of the determination, the pluck and fearlessness of the northern troops that gave the federal troops the resounding victory over Biafran soldiers that they had. It is a pity that Biafran soldiers wasted their time, energy and resources in the battle field, looting properties or searching dead bodies and fallen soldiers from both sides for money, cigarettes and other valuables in order to go home and turn them into articles of trade. The northern soldier, on the other hand, was in the battlefield as a serious and highly motivated and dedicated fighter. His sole mission was to bring dignity and glory to his country by pursuing and destroying the enemy wherever he could find him.

Secondly, while uncoordinated and unauthorized retreat from the front line out of fear by Biafran troops was the order of the day, the federal troops on the other hand were an embodiment of discipline and steadfastness and remained scientific in the art of fighting. The claims of the Biafrans that Northerners were illiterates seemed to have no relevance there. Both our commanders and men were

legendary in their resoluteness and used the element of surprise tactics to the envy and horror of Biafran soldiers. Thirdly, the Northern troops, by their nature, conduct and fighting reputation, had become a terror in the minds of the Biafran soldiers. This got to the extent that the mere presence of federal troops within ten miles of the Biafran frontline, sent the latter running helter-skelter in complete disarray and panic, from their front positions. Fourthly, on most Biafran lines, the soldiers spent their time and energy hunting for saboteurs amongst themselves and among their civilians in the rear. Every successful movement of the federal troops, as the northern troops were called, would spark off series of accusations within the enemy's ranks. In most cases, it did not end with arrests alone, but more often than not, accusations gave rise to severe punishment, detention of hundreds of innocent civilians and soldiers who were emotionally referred to as "sabo" short for saboteurs.

In the heat of the war, the fear of the conquering northern troops was so serious and so demoralizing that Biafrans were literally suspecting even their own shadows and shooting at themselves, believing them to be those of federal troops. A sound of the federal troops' big guns twenty miles away, was enough to make a whole town of more than 500,000 inhabitants, their animals and birds as well as their movable property pack and disappear forever into the thick forest. In fact, from the records and true stories available to us, a substantial cause of the Biafran dilemma during the entire war period, was sheer cowardice, incompetence and propensity for making quick money typical of Igbos and grabbing materials they could steal from among themselves. This negative conduct was not only limited to the

civilians of Biafra, but also extended to the ordinary soldiers, their officer cadre, as well as to the Highest hierarchy of the government of Biafra up to this day and forever! For example, records are now available on how their military top brass engaged in the game of hide and seek, over carting away of valuable materials, including government securities, from the Biafran enclave into foreign countries for safe custody. The climax of this corruption finally found official confirmation, when Ojukwu himself as the head of the Biafran government, at the dying hours of the ill fated regime, flew out of the country with a plane loaded with valuable securities and instruments belonging to the former Eastern region, to Abidjan in Ivory Coast. Up to date, nobody could even guess what had happened to these unaccounted for billions of naira worth of government securities.

# CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## The General Characteristics of the North

This bloc as I have pointed out earlier, occupies more than seventy percent of the landmass of Nigeria, stretching from the Sahara desert in the North, right down to the fringes of the rainforest of the South, beyond River Niger. The North consists of the richest grain producing areas in Nigeria and has more than 65% of the total population. This area is also inhabited by more than 250 different ethnic groups with the Hausa and Fulani groups, being the largest combined single ethnic group. Each ethnic group depicts unique characteristics of its people centred on its separate language or dialect. However, Hausa language is essentially the lingua-franca of almost all northern ethnic groups and consequently, the people have, through the passage of history, been moulded into some universal culture of what is now known as Hausa-Fulani. This means that, any average Northerner anywhere, always behaves and displays similar characteristics, his peculiar ethnicity notwithstanding. This universal behaviour always gives the Northerners a unique and unprecedented affinity among themselves. In other words, this inherent binding force tends to minimize suspicion among them, as against what obtains in the West or the East. For instance, despite the creation of twenty states from the former Northern Region, an indigene of any of the twenty Northern states can be made a very senior executive in the service of another state other than his own. The same principle applies in inter-ethnic marriages from Adamawa to Sokoto and from Maiduguri to Offa.

Any day, if any group of leaders from the twenty Northern states are to meet to discuss any national or zonal issue, the question of who would lead or chair the occasion is no problem. This is often decided within less than five minutes from the time the meeting commences. This situation applies to any level of representation in the North. In fact, it is this unwritten but accepted norm in the North that causes the assumption that the 20 states of the North do not exist at all because, the Northerners have always behaved as one solid unit whenever a national problem is presented.

That the war would end with federal troops, mostly Northerners, winning was my expectation. I did not expect anything less. It may seem immodest for a northern writer to give an average Northerner much higher marks in the field of valour and bravery, as against his colleagues on the other side of the divide, but if the truth is to be told, devoid of any sentiments, the Nigerian civil war of our time should be enough proof. Even before then, our European masters from the time of the Royal Niger Company of the 19th century, who were the forerunners to the British Colonialists in Nigeria, had established concrete evidence that Northerners were the best security forces in the broadest sense of the word. This was because the first civil force which they raised to protect their trading fortresses, their river ports, their depots and their working staff along the banks of the River Niger from the sea, up to Lokoja, was composed mainly of Hausa or northern personnel. Hence the historic name of "Hausa Constabulary". At that time, the first security force was designed to serve two purposes. Its initial duty was paramilitary in nature. It warded off attacks on the Company's staff and accompanied minor expeditions into bush areas

along the riverbanks. It also provided escorts to visiting foreign agents into the hinterland, in order to negotiate trade agreements with native rulers dotted along the banks of the River Niger and the creeks of the rain forest areas. It was the threatening and intimidating fire cover of these fearless units, which enabled the European staff of the Royal Niger Company to visit, draw up and sign agreements with Obas and other Chiefs covering the Lagos and Benin Kingdoms without any serious setbacks. They also ensured the protection of all fixed assets and other structural establishments of the company like warehouses, stores, outposts, installation and settlement units of the company, as well as newly established markets, where natives and foreigners converged to exchange items of trade. In other words, the Hausa Constabulary of the 1800s upwards, was for all intents and purposes both military and paramilitary and also a civil force. Later, when the British colonial power took over the control of the West African colonies of Ghana (Gold Coast), Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Nigeria from the Royal Niger Company and from other agencies, it drew the majority of its West African Frontier Force from the main stream of the Hausa Constabulary of the Royal Niger Company fame, while reconstituting the remaining force to form the first armed Hausa Police in 1861. The latter was subsequently remodeled and constituted as the Nigeria Police. This means that both the present Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Army were offshoots of the famous dependable and fearless force of the Hausa Constabulary of the defunct Royal Niger Company.

The present generation might also want to know why our colonial masters and their trading companies came to have preference for Northerners as opposed to other Nigerians, in the southern parts of Nigeria.

Why did they prefer the Hausa-Fulani stock who were just squatters among the teeming millions of the indigenous populations of the South? Was it by accident that the Europeans chose the Northerners to man their security facilities? The simple answer to this question is that the colonial masters knew what they were doing because on arrival on Nigerian shores, they first tried and examined all available labour force they could find. They selected them most randomly at first and placed them through the same known laid down procedure of recruitment without giving due consideration to their ethnic backgrounds. But after observing their performances over a long period of time, the Southerners were found to be better as clerks, office managers and trading agents, while those of Hausa background were more courageous, dedicated, honest and trustworthy on matters of safety of lives and property and in their ability to withstand hardship with minimum complaint. This trend continued and subsequently found expression in the commendable performance of the West African Frontier Force, in the conquest and pacification of the Nigeria territory and other former British West African Colonies. Next was the campaign against the Germans in the Cameroon and thereafter, in both the first and second world wars. In the Second World War for instance, Northerners outnumbered all the colonial soldiers of the four British colonies of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia put together. This tradition of the Northerner's love for military service and Police force, for pure adventure and sheer pride of defending one's country with one's blood if necessary, is an inheritance and had been tested in those international wars of yesteryears before our recent civil war. It may be of interest to know that, up to the time the civil war broke out in 1967, the then six northern states alone had more than 70% of

the total population of retired or ex-military personnel of the First and Second World Wars fame in the whole federation of Nigeria. In fact, before then, almost all the security guards in any establishment and private homes especially in the southern parts of Nigeria, be it in Lagos, Port Harcourt or Enugu, were of northern origin. Now the question is, why did the Southern elite inherit the legacy of the Royal Niger Company or of Lord Lugard and his administrative outfit of using people of northern origin to produce and provide personal security for them and their property? The answer is simple. To entrust someone with your personal security presupposes real trust on the person. Furthermore, such a person must have some basic qualities, among which is his courage to stand his ground against anybody or group who wants to attack his employer or vandalize his property. That is the most important and tested quality of a security guard. That is also the backbone of any loyal and dependable fighting force, and this principle still holds water anywhere in the world today.

## Still on the Hausa Constabulary

In order for me to further buttress the historical fact that from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and right up to the beginning of the 1900s when the British Government abrogated the Royal Niger Company charter of 1896 and replaced it with the direct colonization of the entire area surrounding the Niger, Benue and Gongola rivers (otherwise known as Nigeria), the real and superior military position of the Hausa national group has always been recognized. This statement of fact can be seen from the writing of an Igbo historian in the

person of Mr. Sam C. Ukpabi, in his book *Mercantile Soldiers in Nigerian history*. In order to do justice to this statement and my views, I reproduce here some parts of the book: "It was mentioned earlier that the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) also adopted the system of establishing companies each of which was made up of a particular ethnic group as obtained in the Royal Niger Company (RNC) army" (page 257). The three hundred and fifty men handed over to the WAFF in January 1898 comprised Hausa, Yoruba and Nupe who were separated into various companies. While it is not true to state that the fame of the Hausa as "a martial race" was due to William Goldie, yet he did a great deal to foster this image. It is of course necessary to remember that the Hausa had served in the Gold Coast Constabularies before the establishment of the R.N.C. army. Through their performance in various battles, they established a great reputation for themselves and were in constant demand to fill the vacancies in the colonial forces established along the west coast of Africa. As the Royal Niger Company extended its authority into the lower reaches of Hausaland, it was in a good position to tap this human resource for its own army. From 1897, soon after the Bida and Ilorin campaigns, it began to receive requests from the Gold Coast government and from the Niger Coast Protectorate government for the recruitment of Hausa men for their forces. The Royal Niger Company complied with these requests the best way it could but only after it had satisfied its own needs in this direction. With the establishment of the W.A.F.F, the Royal Niger Company cooperated in the recruitment of the Hausa as well as the carriers needed to maintain the new force in the field. It was this satisfaction with the performance of the Hausa, which caused Goldie to recommend that an army made up of them (Hausa) should be established and

used for imperial purposes throughout West Africa. Great Britain has had to rely too much in recent years on Indian troops for tropical climates, declared Goldie. This is not a healthy condition of things, for many reasons. She may well find an independent source of military strength in the regions bordering the southern limits of the great Sahara. Goldie's views were not lost on Lugard who continued to prefer the enlistment of Hausa to any other ethnic groups. But in 1898, most of Hausaland was still closed to recruitment and those Hausa enlisted were too few even to satisfy the needs of either the W.A.F.F or the Royal Niger Company. Although the Nupe, the Igala and other ethnic groups were enlisted, they were not considered as good as the Hausa. Goldie and Wallace were able to pass on their prejudice against the Nupe to Lugard. The Nupe, according to Wallace, were not 'a martial race' because they had been slaves for too long and would 'bolt in panic' if they were asked to fight against their master, the Fulani. While Goldie and his men could not be held responsible for categorizing various ethnic groups in Nigeria as martial or 'non martial' (a pet-subject with many British Officers in Nigeria before and after this period) they certainly contributed a good deal to this notion which was used as a guide in recruiting Nigerians during the world wars. A significant contribution to the success of W.A.F.F. and the government of Northern Nigeria after 1900, was the fact that many experienced military and political officers who served the Royal Niger Company, later transferred their service to the government of Northern Nigeria. That's from a book by an Igbo writer. I only sympathize with Prof. Sam C. Ukpabi for his inability to cite even one incident where the pre-colonial masters of the Niger Delta and Benue Rivers (Traders and Conquerors), found it suitable or

necessary to establish either an Igbo or a lower Niger people constabulary unit to fight and defend their rights and possessions from 1890 to 1900. The naked and bitter truth is that those early foreigners and their successors of the 1900s, did not find the Igbos or the other Niger Delta natives fit for such trust! In fact, when one of the three leaders and founders of the Royal Niger Company in the person of Goldie identified and christened the Hausa-Fulani indigenes as a 'martial race' he was not doing it to praise or please the Hausa/Fulani as the only reliable natives found suitable in the lower and upper Niger and Benue Rivers and indeed up into the hinter lands who were trustworthy. He was forced, in the face of ten years of extreme struggles with the people of the Niger Delta areas, during several murderous expeditions directed against the Royal Niger Company and later during pacification operations in the hinterland of Nigeria after 1900-1914. As in those years of empire building by the white men of all foreign nationalities, identifying and recruiting reliable, fearless, courageous and comparatively honest native tribes to assist them was not an easy task. Therefore, it became a matter of life and death for any foreign operator to secure dependable assistants or allies if he was to succeed in the arduous task of conquering or ensuring the establishment of authority on the natives occupying those creeks, water ways and isolated settlements. These were people who had no rudiments of central authority, save minor chiefdoms and clan heads each of whom was a lord unto himself. All these historical revelations found relevance one hundred and twenty years later in the 1967-1970 Nigerian civil war. It was the great-great grand children of the Hausa constabularies, Nupe constabularies and a very few Yoruba units who gave birth to the northern soldiers

who subdued the Igbo soldiers of the dream called Biafra. History will forever repeat itself since the character of each ethnic group of Nigeria is ingrained in their blood and sinews. I think I am not wrong in my assessment of the contemporary Nigerians of various ethnic nationalities, based on both previous and current situations on the ground. The majority of serious minded individuals always believe that only war or serious situations would separate the grains from the chaff. In peace, all appear equal until the drums of war are sounded. It is then that one will differentiate between men and women, heroes and heroines and of course from the comfort and money seekers of every society in the world and the brave ones. From time immemorial, war results have been the main vehicle of creating empires, countries and states and of course of losing sovereignties the world over. As in the animal kingdom, where domains and territories are determined by the strongest, so is the case with the history of mankind from time immemorial. Leadership is the preserve of the strong and courageous while the weak is always confined to the realm of obedience deserving only justice and fair treatment. No kingdom has ever been established at a round table conference. It is the boundaries of such a kingdom/countries that are subsequently negotiated and drawn under the cool atmosphere of an office.

# CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## Some Reflections

Normally in accordance with international conventions, when a war is ended either through a truce or through the declaration of a victor and a vanquished, assets of the defeated are declared to the victors. Moreover, a celebration of the victory is also recorded for the sake of history and posterity. After that, certificates and medals are awarded for gallantry and exceptional conduct during the hostilities. Awards are also granted to military and para-military units which performed their duties with exceptional brilliance and diligence. However, in a rare show of gallantry and magnanimity, General Gowon in his usual humane manner, prevailed on the Nigerian Military Authorities to waive such ceremonies. He further argued that the defeated people were not foreigners, they were Nigerians misled into misadventure by their overzealous leaders. He said that any ceremonies at that point of Nigeria's existence should be to celebrate the

end of the senseless war, stressing that, that would be the desired balm to soothe overdrawn nerves and heal wounds on both sides of the war. Moreover, he said that doing that would serve to extenuate the humiliation of defeat of the vanquished side.

At the end of the war, General Gowon went through the list of the Biafran prisoners of war and with advice from the Nigerian Military Authorities reinstated some of them into the Nigerian Army. The bad cases were dismissed, all in the spirit of brotherhood. Those Biafrans reinstated were allowed to continue their services and continue to rise through the ranks without any strings attached. With the benefit of hindsight, was General Gowon's action appreciated as a genuine sacrifice in the task to keep Nigeria one?

When the war ended, Nigeria declared her own prisoners of war in accordance with international conventions. The Biafrans did not declare theirs. When asked about this, they said there were no prisoners. The truth is that most of the prisoners taken by the Igbos were of northern origin. At regular intervals during the war, these captured and now unarmed soldiers were first paraded, then killed in the most beastly fashion. It is either that their bodies were first dismembered and left to die a slow death or they were skewered in the Hausa man's "Suya" fashion and then left to die a slow and painful death. Another method of executing the captured northern soldiers was by taking them to the market place arms tied behind their backs making and asking an already charged mob to put them to death slowly.

The least one can say is that these dastardly acts were against the Geneva Convention which stipulates that prisoners of war be treated fairly. (See Appendix: A war prisoners report compiled by my humble self, on the day-to-day operations from 1 Division Nigerian Army). All the thousands of Biafrans captured were released after the war, while all the federal troops captured by the Biafrans as contained in my records were murdered. For instance, the only survivors of captured federal troops who were alive were three indigenes of the Mid-West: Commissioner of Police Adeola (non-Igbo), Commissioner of Police Ibekwe (Ika Igbo) and one other Mid-Westerner. When they were interrogated by federal Authorities as to what happened to hundreds of other captured federal soldiers, including Lt. Bugaje, the survivors told the Government a shocking and chilling story of brutal and sadistic killing of all prisoners of war of northern origin by methods not even suitable to be printed here. In short, all of them were individually mutilated limb by limb, over a long period so as to prolong their suffering before their final death. In fact, I recall that General Gowon on receiving this awful report, advised that nobody among members of the Supreme Military Council, should leak it then to the troops on the field lest the victorious federal troops would, out of blind and genuine anger, pounce and destroy the surrendering Biafrans. These acts of murder were not only totally against the Geneva Convention, but also most outrageously wicked and fit only for the lowest animals.

**Questions**: Shouldn't the Biafrans be charged with genocide? Understandably General Gowon kept all this as a secret for some time, but what happened to the National Conscience when the facts were made known? Was General Gowon morally right to have kept these

facts from the public and the Army? Was he right not to have done anything to right the eternal wrong? Not being a police officer who will see security problems in their proper perspective, was General Gowon right to have allowed the euphoria of winning the war to cloud the reality on the ground? When an army surrenders after a war in which it was defeated, it is asked to surrender all its weapons of war. That is the practice the world over. At the end of the Nigerian civil war, only about 25% of the weapons were recovered from the other side by the Federal Military Authorities. The remaining 75% were said to have been buried in the ground there.

**Question**: Given that out of the 75% some found their way into the hands of armed robbers, what happened to the remaining? Several years after, why hasn't anything been said about those weapons? Where are they now? Are they the weapons MASSOB is relying on to actualize Biafra?

It is on record that on the eve of Biafra's surrender, Ojukwu unscrupulously dispatched first his immediate family and then himself and friends to the safe custody of his friends in Ivory Coast, leaving the haggard and half dead people in the lurch. He took with him as much of the Eastern Nigerian government property and wealth as he could move, including vital top security documents, bonds and bills. Question: What has the Federal Government done about those security documents? Were any questions asked about the legitimacy and morality of Ojukwu's actions? Both General Yakubu Gowon who declared "No victor, no vanquished" and President Shehu Shagari who granted Ojukwu state pardon to return to Nigeria much later, are Northerners.

**Question**:

Do Igbos still remember this fact? Do their current actions show they are appreciative of the importance of this fact? Isn't the "No victor, no vanquished" principle contradictory? Certainly the civil war was lost by the Biafrans and won by the federal troops as confirmed in a public ceremony by the surrender of the instruments of war by the then rebel leader Philip Effiong as witnessed by all and sundry. Shall we continue to delude ourselves?

# CHAPTER NINETEEN

## Still on Faith and Valour: lest we Forget

The records of the civil war are full of stories of dedication, heroism and exploits of the northern soldiers. However, if one is to name a few, I cannot hesitate to mention the glowing tributes paid to one private soldier named Abdullahi by no other person than his commander, the General Officer Commanding the famous 3rd Marine Commando Division, General Olusegun Obasanjo, when he wrote in his book ***My Command*** his testimony to the dedicated and high motivation of the northern private soldier thus: *"one other experience worth recalling among many was that of private Abdullahi in 105 battalion moved to the start line, which was about one position. Just before H-Hour; I saw this middle-aged soldier taking out from his haversack a small leather-praying mat. He moved back some five yards, put down his sack and laid down his rifle to his right and crouched down on the small mat to pray. Soon the battalion started to move forward and Abdullahi was still praying. I decided not to disturb him and I stopped anybody else from doing so. I wanted to see what he was up to. After his comrades had advanced about one hundred and fifty yards, Abdullahi wiped his face with his two hands, quickly packed his praying mat in his haversack; put the sack on his back, grabbed his loaded rifle and said, 'Babu Mutuwa'—meaning no death—before running to join his comrades. I followed and took a special interest in Abdullahi's performance that day. Showing unusual courage and*

*defying all caution, he became the dogged spirit of his platoon. At first, I thought he was slacking and trying to make up for his apparent early playing. Within half mile of the advance the battalion ran up against very formidable and well-prepared rebel defensive position. The casualties were heavy, with both dead and wounded on our side. We had to move 106 Battalion quickly to stem the tide and save the day. Abdullahi had not a scratch on him and when he saw me later in the evening he asked, 'Ban gaya maka ba?' Meaning didn't I tell you? I marveled at his faith and his fate. War, of course, is a situation that required faith; faith in your equipment, faith in your comrades and colleagues, faith in God or the Supreme Being in whatever you do."*

Compare and contrast a totally opposite attitude depicted by a Yoruba (Lt. Col. Ayo Ariyo) who was then the second sector commander in Calabar under General Obasanjo at the 3rd Marine Commando on page 81 of the same book:

*“Calabar was the last sector to be visited. The sector commander, Lt. Col. Ayo Ariyo, who had shown great fighting spirit in operations leading to the capture of Opobo and Port Harcourt, had lost interest in the war because he had been passed over for promotion. He consequently lost interest in his duties and decided to direct his interest to purchasing attractive items in the war fronts and shipping them through naval ships to Lagos. He explained to me later that what he saw of the style of living of Officers in Lagos during Gowon's marriage killed any fighting spirit left in him. To rekindle his interest in the war as a fighting soldier, it would have been necessary to bring Lt. Col. Ayo Ariyo into the mainstream of active operations in Port Harcourt. He gave me complex*

*medical reasons for remaining in Calabar and reporting at Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) once a month.*

Furthermore, just imagine the appalling disciplinary situation that ensued when on July 6th, 1967, the 3rd Battalion comprising more of Yoruba soldiers than northern soldiers, specially raised initially to assist the defence of Ibadan under the command of Major Olu Bajowa, was transferred to the Nsukka sector to face real battle front experience. Because of the different psychological commitments to the war between the northern soldiers who were a minority in the battalion and their Yoruba counterparts, the unit performed far below the normal known federal unit standard. This was simply because the Yoruba soldiers deserted the war front, leaving their comrades in a terrible dilemma. The Yoruba soldiers did that shameful thing as a result of the political attitude of Chief Awolowo who at the beginning announced that the war was only between the Hausas and the Ibos.

This situation was confirmed by General Olusegun Obasanjo in the same book ***My Command*** on pages 28-29: *"the performance of 3rd Battalion as a fighting unit left much to be desired when it was launched in the battle of Nsukka Sector under 1 Infantry Brigade. The reasons were not far to seek. The battalion was mixed in composition, consisting of northern troops and 'Yoruba soldiers'. But the mutual suspicions and distrust referred to earlier have left a sour taste in the relationship between the troops. Officers did not show commitment and dedicated leadership. At that point, the political attitude in the West to the war was of aloofness. This obviously affected the fighting spirit and will of soldiers of Western*

*State origin, some of whom deserted at the warfront leaving their comrades in the lurch.*"

This situation was at variance with what was happening among the federal troops in operations. For example, stories were told and retold by civilians about the federal war machines, especially of the fiery Commander of the 2nd Division of the Nigeria Army, Col. Murtala Muhammed, that when the most dreaded commander was only fifteen (15) kms away from the war front, the rebels would start withdrawing from their locations in the West and Midwestern states out of sheer fear. In fact, it was said that the rebels started their disorganized withdrawals without getting normal orders from their high command. This, no doubt was in response to the awesome charisma of Col. Murtala Muhammed when he was in Ore on his drive to Benin.

Another current incident that confirmed the unique nature of an average Northerner is contained in the answer I gave to the people of the Niger Delta of the South-South and their resource control campaign on the floor of the last Nigeria Political Reform Conference of 2005, at the International Conference Hall Abuja. I had to reply to the shameless accusation heaped upon Northerners calling them or referring to them as the parasites of Nigeria. The following was the full text of what I said as reported by some national Dailies:

*From 1967, about 40 years ago, when twelve states were created by General Gowon, and some Military personnel were appointed Governors, we the Northerners sincerely assumed that the people of the South-South, otherwise known as the Oil Producing areas, were and are the best friends of the*

*Northerners out of the entire southern states, not least for the following reasons:*

a. It was the federal troops, which comprised 90% Northerners, who shed their blood in the 30 months civil war, in order to liberate the people of the South-South, so that they could enjoy the benefit of the states creation in their areas, by northern leadership under General Gowon.
b. It is on record that in the course of this war, hundreds or thousands of Northerners were killed, maimed and wounded in a sustained effort to liberate the South-South people from the clutches of their slave-masters, otherwise known as Igbos of "Biafra".
c. Anybody who has doubts can visit Port Harcourt, Calabar, Enugu and Benin military cemeteries, where 90% of the graves of the fallen soldiers bear northern names like Ibrahim, Sani, Jallo, etc. With the exception of late Major Isaac Boro from the Niger Delta, no other grave of any distinguished man is lying among the dead soldiers from the so called Niger Delta areas.
d. As a matter of fact, when Governors were appointed by General Gowon, the Governors of the Rivers and South Eastern states could not take up their positions in their respective states, for fear of being destroyed by the rebel Biafran soldiers. For nearly three months, they could not step into their states but instead stayed in Ikoyi, Lagos until about 200 soldiers of northern origin, the children of whom are now described as parasites, escorted them by sea under air cover. In the same vein, a high ranking Military Governor from one of their states—the Midwest, by the name of Col. David Ejoor, had to run away from Benin to Lagos on a bicycle, a distance of about 84km, thus abandoning his state and command when the rebel soldiers invaded and overran the state. Subsequently, the

state was rescued by a Northerner, Col. Murtala Muhammed.

e. The people of the South-South now have spokesmen and "leaders" who are a bunch of cowards and opportunists to the core. They only specialize as saboteurs, kidnappers, hostage takers and blackmailers.
f. It is pertinent to note that at the end of the civil war, in sympathy with the deprived people of the South-South, the then Head of State General Yakubu Gowon, Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, passed an irrevocable decree which transferred virtually all the landed properties of the rebels located in the South-South to the people of the South-South as compensation for the damages brought on them through illegal occupation and exploitation of their mother land over a period running into hundreds of years.
g. In addition, at the time this decision was taken, the people of the South-South had less than 20% ownership of the landed properties within their domain. The bulk of the landed property was owned by the Igbo occupiers posing as masters. Moreover, the current value of these abandoned properties is worth Ten Trillion Naira. In fairness to the Igbos, these properties must be returned to them or appropriate compensation paid by the people of the South-South. At the point in time, majority of the people of the South-South lived either abroad or in other towns in Nigeria with no personal houses or landed property in their hometowns. This is in view of the ingrate behaviours of the greedy people of the South-South, who wanted absolute control of the other resources from their areas to the exclusion of all Nigerians.

H. Now more than 40 years after the Civil war and the liberation of the South-South, we the Northerners are faced with the most appalling of all puzzles—that the South-Southerners call the

Northerners parasites! It is indeed incredible, but they said it loud and clear and repeated it at the National Political Reform Conference. Ironically, the South-Southerner who made the recent "parasites" assertion is a senior citizen of the area who also served as federal commissioner under the regime of General Yakubu Gowon, the regime that liberated them.

We Northerners are certainly not "parasites" but a people who gave them their six states, their houses and physical protection—in fact their lives.

I.Therefore, such an act of extreme greed and ingratitude could only be seen from the people of the South-South, who are just waking up to and becoming intoxicated by the phenomenal wealth that blinded them from remembering where they were 45 years ago and how they became what they are today.

J.The North and Nigerians in general, will never forget nor are we prepared to stand by and just watch while those who did not sow anything are now trying to enjoy a harvest on the facilities we solely provided with our blood!

K. This declaration needs no elaboration as it clearly and unequivocally portrays the well known prowess of Northerners as a martial group in Nigeria, before, now and forever.

# CHAPTER TWENTY

## An Overview of the Federal Character System for Nigeria's Future

It is amazing that up to the time of writing this book, only a very negligible portion of Nigerian leadership is aware of why the founding fathers of the nation did formulate the policy known today in Nigeria as federal character, as one of the cornerstones of the Nigerian nation. Unfortunately, this gross ignorance is now having a telling effect in the form of the weaknesses and lapses in the nation's security as well as in the running of other vital national institutions. In order to do justice to this very important policy, one has to first of all define the concept of Federal Character Policy, or Quota System.

Ironically, majority of Nigerians are either ignorant or have mischievously decided to feign ignorance of the fact that the now hated policy of Federal Character or Quota System as being practised in Nigeria was the legitimate brain child of the combination of westernization policy, and the despised northernization policy of the Regional Governments of the fifties and sixties.

Federal character as a federal government policy could be defined in several ways, depending on individual point of view. To me, the policy means giving every constituent body in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as represented by states and

local governments, a sense of participation and belonging in all federal institutions without sacrificing merit. By the same token, the state governments are expected to treat various local governments within their boundaries in the same manner. Apart from this main guideline, there exist several directives that federal institutions located in the states should engage all the lower cadre of their staff from among the people of the area where such a federal institution is located. The good intention is meant to ensure that the federal character policy is reflected at the lower level of the federal civil service, while at the higher level, it may seem practically impossible owing to unavoidable constraints. Federal character extends to special services such as the Armed Forces and Security Agencies like the Police, Customs, etc. It had also assumed more pronounced posture and at times referred to as quota system in recruitment and training of public staff to the extent that it has been enshrined in both the constitution and many policy guidelines and ministerial circulars and directives. It is forty-five years now (1967) since the policy of federal character and its twin sister, the quota system, were introduced in sensitive services, including the Armed Forces, Police, Customs, Immigration and Prison Services. Yet, better, more efficient and dedicated services still elude this nation until such a time that the full impact of the policy of federal character and quota system as foreseen by the founding fathers is felt. It is then and only then, that we will witness and realize her dream of such standard Nation as will be characterized by efficiency, honesty of services to duty and dedication.

What does Federal character as a policy signify in Nation-Building? It was intended to ensure unity in

diversity, but the issue is whether after forty five years of its existence, the policy has been a success or not. Since the whole question of federal character revolves around the presence of Nigerians, irrespective of their place of origin, creed, tribe, religion, etc. in the federal government service, one cannot do justice to the question of virtues of federal character until one identifies and acknowledges the role expected of the Northerner, Westerner or Easterner in the process of nation-building. In other words, the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo and other ethnic groups occupying the three old geographical territories, have vital roles to play in integrating the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

No Federal Character, no Effective and Efficient Armed Forces, Police, Customs, Immigration and Prison Services. In any nation, some vital and special institutions must be given special consideration because any country that exists without special attention paid to them will only do so at its own peril. The institutions concerned are the country's forces, (Army, Navy and Air Force). These are the bodies constitutionally charged with the sole responsibility of the defence of the nation. The next body is a nation's Police Force whose main constitutional duties or responsibilities centre on maintenance of law and order in the country so as to create a conducive atmosphere for the citizens of the nation to pursue their daily activities without hindrance or fear of any kind. Concomitant to this first duty, is the additional responsibility of prevention and detection of crimes. Another constitutional requirement Of the Police Force, is that in any time of crisis, they are expected to assist the military in performing its own duties effectively as it happened during the last civil war

(1967-70). Furthermore, the term 'security agencies' include the Customs, the Immigration and the Prison Services. Since any operation for the protection of lives and property is a combined responsibility of all, there should therefore be fair representation in all the units of the armed forces including the Police, Customs, Immigration and Prison Services.

It has been found to be incontestably true, that where a particular ethnic group is allowed to dominate a particular unit of government, military or otherwise, the tendency is for that group to take an undue advantage of the situation and lord it upon others, thereby creating a feeling of superiority or inferiority depending upon which side you are on. However, such a situation, when allowed to happen among the armed forces and other armed security agencies, will bring about instability among its members on account of legal possession of arms and ammunition backed up by their nature of training. In simple terms, soldiers are trained and groomed to fight and kill human beings, as the principal objective of their training. While police and other security agencies, on the other hand, with a few exceptions, are trained to maintain law and order, prevent fundamentally and detect crimes and to operate in all sorts of hostile environment short of war situation. That is to say, their job is to curb crimes and criminals. Invariably, one feels a great sense of security when one sees one's kinsmen among such members of the armed forces or security agencies in an area where one lives or works. It does not matter in practice whether such a kinsman in uniform is a devil or an angel. To buttress this argument, the Democrat newspaper of 21st November 1991, reported a case of a non-indigene of Kano fleeing the Kano riots. When he was asked why he was leaving Kano for home, he said "it is better to die

at home than to be killed uselessly away from home." This shows that people prefer to die among their relations and people though knowing fully well that it actually makes no difference where, when or how one dies. Therefore, all these points go to underline the advantage of enforcing the federal character within our armed forces and security agencies. One more important feature of the federal character, is that it could minimize the possibility of military coup-d'etat. Since the first military coup in Nigeria in 1966, staged by the five infamous Majors, mostly Igbo, many well meaning Nigerians have expressed opinions aimed at finding a lasting solution to the problem of military coups in Nigeria. But the answer has always been to tinker with the military structure in such a way as to give no room for tribal connivance, typical of the infamous five Igbo majors' action of 15th January 1966. If we decide today to restructure the hierarchy and all commands from army headquarters right down to the platoons, it will be near impossible for any ethnic group to organize a coup without the plot being leaked somewhere. There is no better panacea for preventing military takeovers in Nigeria, than meaningful equal representation in all the national institutions up to the level of the local government. This means that, federal character should now be broadened to include the Seven Hundred and Seventy Four Local Government Areas as catchment areas for the Military, the Police, the Customs, the Immigration, the Federal Road Safety, the Nigerian Security and the Prison Services in this country. The exercise should also be extended to all non-security federal institutions.

Implication of Federal Character in Sensitive Federal Agencies, Ministries and Institutions: From my own experience as a former security operative and

former Military Governor of one of the twelve states during the last civil war, I have discovered that no military or security agency in Nigeria could ever stand its ground as a national security body without a thorough and deliberate mixture of the members of the entire Nigerian ethnic groups in any of its formations. This is essential, when one takes into consideration that each geographical area of the country is blessed with people who are specially gifted with some unique characteristics. You cannot therefore aspire to be a strong nation without assembling and harnessing these rare qualities as your national assets.

Between the Former National Bank, Continental Bank and Bank of the North: In order to buttress the points regarding the importance of federal character in our vital institutions, let me X-ray the structures of some vital institutions which lacked the mixture of imperatives... I have mentioned earlier on in this book, that the virtues of federal character do not start and end with the armed forces and security agencies. The importance of federal character is in every federal institution as well as other public institutions such as the former state owned banks, the new Public Banks and other financial houses. The best way to judge the virtues or otherwise of federal character in vital institutions which are also seen as representatives of the leading three ethnic groups, is to study their past operations. Such a study will also reveal the quality and efficiency associated with the influence of the three major ethnic groups of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani. It will also help dismiss the false claim of people who wrongly try to claim that federal character has been responsible for the poor standards due to the performance of certain groups of fellow Nigerians, simply because these

Nigerians hail from certain geographical areas. Ironically, the real panacea for inefficient, lackadaisical and dishonest posture of all federal officials working in the ministries, is centered on the federal character. For instance, the mixing of civil servants in any department or ministry, helps the smooth running of the work of the ministry by means of discouraging the usual conspiracy to cause mishap and fraud through ethnic affiliation. Secondly, the spread of corruption will be minimized because the composite nature of the staff seriously discourages connivance and oath-taking, typical of the secret societies within the services.

The African Continental Bank (ACB) is a typical example of an overwhelmingly all-Igbo establishment. It was owned in its first fifty years by the Eastern Nigerian Government and later the succeeding states of the East. It enjoyed almost 100 percent patronage from Igbo business communities throughout the federation. In terms of staff, it had some of the best paper-qualified staff... With this setting, one could only expect that the bank would excel in efficiency, management, financial prudence, discipline and therefore good annual returns to shareholders. Unfortunately however, in terms of efficient performance, ACB had very little to show. The Bank's history is full of serious cases of fraud and mismanagement, leading to several public enquiries and probes. Even during the five years of SAP, a period when many banks had to show commendable performance, ACB had only records of low turnover when compared with other older banks. The question is: Why was it that ACB's decades of highly qualified management fell short of expectation?

Like ACB, the National Bank of Nigeria (NBN) was one of the oldest banks in Nigeria... It was owned by

the former Western Regional Government and later the new states of the West. It was well patronized and funded by the entire Western and Midwestern regions of Nigeria... As for the staff, it had 100 percent Yoruba staff from the West and Lagos who were all qualified. Given this setting therefore, one cannot see anything whatsoever that would prevent the National Bank of Nigeria from performing creditably well. But, to the astonishment of Nigerians, the bank is one of the edifices of shame, of fraudulent activities and disgraceful mismanagement. The history of the bank, has shown that it had to be rescued twice... Until one Monday, when the CBN found it necessary and in the public interest too, to step in and take over completely the operations of the bank. When the National Bank was compared and contrasted with the other two former indigenous banks, ACB and Bank of the North, the result was a catalogue of gross inefficiency and unpardonable mismanagement.

The third example is the Bank of the North, the youngest among the three premier indigenous banks... In terms of qualification and training of staff... it always had the least paper qualified staff. But in terms of records of performance, efficiency, integrity and responsible financial management, the difference has always been clear. Though the youngest... it had not only the best trading result since its inception in 1956, but also had maintained very responsible and financial ethics... I dare say that the success story of the Bank of the North was traceable mainly to the composite staff of the bank who were drawn from the 250 ethnic groups of the North. In other words, it was manned by all the northern ethnic groups as an example of a regional character to prove the positive philosophy of the federal character policy. This analysis tends to

draw me into a conclusion that there is a hidden inherent factor that makes the Northerners, acting on their own, to be capable of maintaining and running responsible and efficient organizations even with minimum training in total contrast to their counterparts in the East and the West.

No national institution, civil or military, now or in the future can stand responsibly and efficiently unless it reflects the Nigeria federal character in its structure. Today, some of the federal institutions such as the Nigerian Railways, the PHCN, NITEL, National Shipping Line and Nigerian Ports Authority, owed their sickness and their inevitable death in 2006, to the near lopsided employment of their staff. In all respects, such establishments can never perform creditably well, unless they are restructured and overhauled from their Directors to the level of their messengers so as to reflect the essential federal character based not only on states alone, but on all the existing seven hundred and seventy four local government areas. This will be a major check against conspiracy among staff, who are willing members of secret cults or secret societies...

It is common knowledge that, membership of secret societies is now part of the every day life of the southern communities of Nigeria. Oath taking and other fetish practices, take centre stage when selecting people for important political positions as Governors, Legislators and Ambassadors. It is ironical, that people who profess to Islam or Christianity, still find a quiet corner in their minds for juju or ancestral worship... Perhaps, there must be a way of spelling it out to our brothers and sisters from the South, especially the educated ones, that these dark practices hamper

progress and imprison the minds so that, without stopping them, all the capacity building efforts, all the continued education and enlightenment campaign will come to naught. Such practice, as in the selection of candidates for big political offices as witnessed in Anambra and neighbouring states in 2003, where gubernatorial and assembly membership candidates were subjected to dark fetish initiations, must be discouraged at all costs. The result will be disastrous if it is allowed to filter through to sensitive appointments, especially in the armed forces, the police, other security agencies, the apex bank and its subsidiaries and other national institutions.

As a matter of fact, the apex bank and its subsidiaries should be encouraged to have international staff, so that it will assume an international character, strong enough to discourage any dark and blood practice. That is not to say that such ungodly behaviours do not happen in the North. They also do cheat in a different way and to a lesser degree. Here, it is traceable to semi-illiterate Mallams and Christian clerics, who profess to have powers of mediation between people and God. What makes the Northern variety less demonic, is the absence of oath taking, blood shedding and human sacrifice. And more importantly too, such practices in the North, do not directly affect the public institutions as they do in the South, where decisions affecting the larger institutions are made subject to cultism.

Since the first military coup in Nigeria in 1966, staged by the five infamous Majors, mostly Igbo, many well meaning Nigerians have expressed opinions aimed at finding a lasting solution to the problem of military coups in Nigeria. But the answer has

always been to tinker with the military structure in such a way as to give no room for tribal connivance... If we decide today to restructure the hierarchy and all commands from army headquarters right down to the platoons, it will be near impossible for any ethnic group to organize a coup without the plot being leaked somewhere. There is no better panacea for preventing military takeovers in Nigeria, than meaningful equal representation in all the national institutions up to the level of the local government.

Silent Raids on Banks: Nigerian banks, it seems, have not weeded out fraudsters in their employ. Reports by regulators of the industry—the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), have continued to reveal cases of fraud that could dearly erode customers' confidence. In 2007, says NDIC, the banks lost N10.05bn in 1,553 forgery cases, up from N4.6bn in 1,193 theft cases. Both the CBN and the NDIC have always cited inside abuse as the major source of successful robberies in banks, suggesting that the recruitment methods of the financial institutions are faulty. Having honest employees is better than investing in fraud and prevention mechanisms. Crooks should not be in charge of customers' deposits.

Still on Responsible Leadership: When I said earlier in the book that Ojukwu was the panjandrum who refused to show contribution, I meant it as a statement of fact and not as a piece of vituperation. All his actions then, painted a picture of a motion picture actor, whose role has suddenly gone awry but would not listen to directives. I also debunked Ojukwu's claim to superior intellect on account of my personal perception of his unintelligent behaviour. On both positions, I have been vindicated

even if it took over forty years after the civil war to have an official admission from an insider. Chief Raph Uwechue was a Biafran staunch insider who was part of the still born republic's inner circle. In a sensational revelation in the Saturday Sun of 24 October 2009, about forty years after the civil war, he said it was Ojukwu's ego, selfishness and power-drunkness that ruined Biafra. He lamented that Ojukwu could not use his Oxford University degree to advantage by tapping from talented and intelligent Igbo people within and also take a cue from sagacious political actions of other icons across the country. By seeing himself as a supremo, Ojukwu alienated very highly respected Igbo leaders whose counsel would have averted the disaster that was Biafra. According to him, the decision to fail was taken at the very beginning when instead of exploiting political opportunities of actualizing Biafra, Ojukwu went for a doubtful option of secession which finally proved to be too costly in human and material resources.

At a point, [Uwechue] said inter alia: "By keeping Ojukwu constantly enveloped in an atmosphere of superiority, it made him as a matter of habit, distrustful and disdainful of other people's judgment, impatient with their options and finally simply authoritarian."

All the points raised and postulated by Chief Uwechue have been discussed earlier in this book, but the Igbo chieftain ignored another important contributor to the overall Igbo failure i.e. greed. The question of greed as discussed, as a vital factor, has persisted along with other elements in the Igbo political life. I have always insisted that their monumental greed and selfishness make up their incapacity for national leadership. That was what I

said on the floor of the National Political Reform Conference of 2005, which attracted snide comments from the Igbo and for which their delegates walked out in protest. I drew attention to the disastrous outing of the zoned Igbo senate presidency from 2003-2007, where in the approval period of four (4) years, the South East Zone had produced FIVE (5) senate presidents. Evans Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo, Adolphus Wabara, Anyim Pius Anyim and Ken Nnamani all had a taste of the Senate Presidency in a shameful political drama that can only be staged by the Igbo ethnic group. And through that ruse, ALL THE FIVE IGBO SENATE PRESIDENTS HAVE QUALIFIED FOR LIFE PENSIONS thereby maximizing advantage.

On sober reflection, one would ask, why did they do it? Was it because they wanted the office to circulate in as many Igbo States as possible? Whatever reason they chose for doing what they did, it was basically unethical and negates the primary principles of responsible leadership. Greed and sophistry are no positive reason for trivializing an erstwhile responsible office of the senate president... and it is my candid opinion that the perpetrators should be adequately punished. The scenario as painted above is enough to stand in the way of their quest for any responsible national office like the presidency. That for failing to manage the senate presidency out of sheer incapacity, they should not be trusted with the bigger and more sensitive office of the president. In a nutshell, the presidency is too delicate to be trusted to an incapable group that will eventually trivialize, commercialize and desecrate it. ***

# CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

## Conclusion

I sympathize with some eminent Nigerians who find themselves in a spot and who nevertheless had fought for the oneness of the country in the period just before the war and during the civil war proper. Their approach to issues bordering on patriotism seemed at first to be faulty, especially as it was seen to be at variance with the current issue of stemming any rebellion and avoiding any unnecessary bloodshed.

a. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was in Calabar prison before the first military coup of January 15th serving a prison sentence consequent upon his conviction in the treason trial of 1965. After the 2nd coup of July 29th 1966, he was released by General Gowon. It can be painfully remembered that Western leaders of thought, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo himself on 2nd May 1967, declared that they would not participate in any further conference unless every northern soldier was removed from the West. A few days later, Chief Awolowo, Dr. Aluko, Chief Oniya and Chief Mariere of the Midwest, flew into Enugu on a peace mission. These acts alone were more than enough reason to make the Federal Government send the Chief back to prison. However, when the war broke out, he accepted General Yakubu Gowon's invitation to join the Federal Cabinet and was subsequently appointed Commissioner of Finance and Vice Chairman of the Executive Council, which he served creditably, using his vast political

experience. His superb performance made us, the military hard core from the North, to overlook any periodic burst of his negative political hangovers, that had become endemic to such class of leaders. (See pages 43-49 of Elechi Amadi's Sunset in Biafra).

b. In the same vein, we had Mallam Aminu Kano, front line opposition leader in the First Republic, Alhaji Ibrahim Tako Galadima, who was Minister of State in the Defence Ministry in the Tafawa Balewa Government of the First Republic. Alhaji Galadima served in the North-western State as my Commissioner of Health with Alhaji Shehu Shagari, a leading politician from the North. This experienced politician was later appointed to the Federal Executive Council from the North-western state of Nigeria, where he was serving as the Commissioner of Education. Furthermore, the Federal Executive Council of General Yakubu Gowon, was enriched by the membership of another set of veteran politicians like Chief Anthony Enahoro, Mr. J. S. Tarka and Chief Edwin Clark. Faced with the prospect of an un-called-for civil war, one can say we were rather more than lucky to have these level headed men of timber and calibre in the Gowon Military Executive Council. I am not qualified to speak for my boss, the Commander-in-Chief, General Gowon, but due to my personal proximity to him, I knew enough to present an assessment of the political gurus of our time. On my own modest part, I can claim that the Nigerian people are also grateful to them for their contribution to keep Nigeria one. Other mature gentlemen, who played similar roles in the success story of the Gowon administration, have been adequately covered by the New Nigerian of 1970 cited in the preceding chapters of this book. There was Alhaji Ali Akilu, Former Secretary of the Northern Executive Council and later, a member of the Northern Think Tank, who worked assiduously for a common front from the North to challenge emerging problems. So also did Alhaji

Adamu Fika (now Wazirin Fika), Secretary of the Northern States Interim Common Services Agency (ICSA). Their combined efforts, which culminated in the rare show of patriotism, materialized in the end result of keeping Nigeria one and this also has qualified us to call ourselves the Victors of the Civil War and our counterparts to have no choice but to settle for the Vanquished!

c. Major General Johnson Thompson Umunnakwe Aguiyi Ironsi, the master hang man tried with the support of his kinsmen to wear the toga of innocence in the most gruesome and outrageous blood-letting in the country. From all the evidence available and after forty years of scrutiny of the events of the January 15th heinous crime, it is evident that nothing could have taken place without his knowledge as the most senior military man not only of the Igbo ethnic group, but also of the whole of Nigeria at that time for the following reasons:

i. The entire Igbo National Group before, during and up till today, were bound by the doctrine of Igbo Unionism to which all Igbos either as direct members or in sympathy with members of their clan wherever they may happen to reside in Nigeria belong. The periodical directives issued from time to time have been binding on all the Igbo men of Nigeria. They are rightly or wrongly known as Nigerians within Nigeria! This cuts across all interests and services in Nigeria. The influence and control exerted on Igbos since 1960 by the Igbo Union, has been more powerful than even their religion. This is because where they differ in religious affiliations, all of them nevertheless, pledge loyalty to the dictates of the almighty Igbo Union.

ii. To that extent and from my knowledge and experience as a former security operative, such momentous decision to strike the heart of Nigeria

without the prior knowledge of General Ironsi could not have been possible. This is the hard truth. The fact that the five murderous Majors, including the arch leader Chukwuma Nzeogwu, could voluntarily agree on 17th January 1966, to hand over the reins of power of the Northern Region to his Superiors in Lagos, and then, in return appoint another officer, in the person of Major Hassan Katsina, the new Governor of the North, pointed to the presence of a hidden agenda, which they wanted other Nigerians to accept as the truth! I am yet to see any person who voluntarily surrenders the complete political and military control of 3/4 of the whole of Nigeria which he secured through complete deception and hail of fire of bullets in an exchange for free biscuits and drinks in the officers mess!! It is indeed a most preposterous episode fit only for fools living in other parts of Nigeria but certainly not the North! So, to all intents and purposes, what transpired within one week after January 15th, was by all available data, very carefully planned beforehand, to make it look the way the planner had wanted it to look. Anything to the contrary i.e. if the General was involved in the execution of the plot, he could have found it difficult to convince other Nigerians that his hands were clean enough to be trusted with the temporary leadership of Nigeria. In reality, from January 15th 1966 up till the 17th Nzeogwu as the de-facto ruler of the whole Federation of Nigeria, could have comfortably declared himself as the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of Nigeria. And there was the fact that the blood bath took place when the President of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, was on leave outside Nigeria, which was a design for him to be away from the scene of the crime so that he could subsequently claim a cast iron alibi when, in fact he was one of the secret ring leaders. In fact, his subsequent disagreement with Ojukwu during the heat of the war, was because Ojukwu refused to agree to hand over

power to him in the event of a Biafran victory. These gimmicks were particularly disappointing, coming from people who perceived themselves as leadership; they were all aware of the above scenario but due to our superior sense of maturity and cool headedness, we waited to see the real intention of the murderous and greedy Igbos before we hit back. That is the permanent spirit of the North before, now and forever!! We are not cowardly. Neither are we as a group stupid nor greedy. We are only more sophisticated in handling statecraft. That is also how and why we won the war hands down!

d. Finally, in the spirit of giving evidence to back-up what is presented here, and in line with the author's professional calling as a senior police detective, I reproduce here the picture of the Head of State of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon... while he, together with us all members of the Supreme Military Council, was receiving the instrument of surrender of the Republic of Biafra from the acting head of that still-born state, Lt. Colonel Philip Effiong on the 15th of January 1970. This was in accordance with the tradition of military procedures all over the world. It is known as the Geneva Convention, and it is used to signal clearly, the status of Federal Military side as the Victor and the Biafrans as the Vanquished side to any spurious dramatic distortions being peddled around nowadays.

Also, I reproduce below the true situation report on the ground during Ojukwu's last hours in the Biafran enclave and the words of the Acting Biafran Head of State as stated in Elechi Amadi's Sunset in Biafra:

i. "Stop must be put to the blood shed and suffering of the people: our people are now disillusioned; these elements of the old Regime who have made negotiation and reconciliation impossible have voluntarily removed themselves from our midst." He

added that he had ordered "an orderly disengagement of troops". He said "a delegation was ready to meet the representatives of the federal government anywhere to negotiate a peace settlement on the O.A.U resolution".

ii. In a midnight broadcast the following night, General Gowon welcomed the surrender; saying that we have arrived at the end of a tragic and bloody conflict. The Head of State promised amnesty for those who were misled into supporting secession, but not those who misled them (My Words).

**Last Word**

Despite all the heinous crimes of treason and carting away all the major assets and securities of the former Eastern Regional Government at the end of the war by Ojukwu, the president of the second Republic—Alhaji Shehu Usman Shagari in 1982, granted Ojukwu amnesty without even a trial. This, Shagari did to acquire cheap political support for himself and for his party the NPN, under the obvious influence of his deputy, Dr. Alex Ekwueme. It is surprising that after the amnesty, not even a word was said about the stolen assets of the former Eastern Region to which the present Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Bayelsa states are entitled to a share.